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A
TALE OF THE TIMES.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF *A GOSSIP'S STORY*.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO MRS. CARTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Nor shall the pile of hope God's mercy rear'd,

By vain philosophy be e'er destroy'd :

Eternity, by all or wish'd or fear'd,

Shall be by all or suffer'd or enjoy'd.

MASON'S *Elegy on the Death of Lady Coventry*.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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A

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CHAP. XVIII.

O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her vot'ry yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!

BEATTIE.

THE interest which the appearance and
behaviour of Mr. Powercourt had ex-
cited in lord Monteith's mind had more
permanence than the sudden emotions
to which his disposition was subject com-
monly possessed. His evanescent im-
pulses

pulses might generally be compared to the impression which a stone makes upon the clear surface of a glassy lake, which, after having formed a few tremulous circles, soon resumes its natural tranquillity. But on the present occasion he thought of his good-tempered rival, as he termed him, during most part of his journey to Scotland; and, as neither a whistle nor a song would always excite new ideas, he frequently expressed himself anxious to know whether the poor fellow had shot himself: "Yet I protest, my dear Geraldine," he added, "I do not laugh at him; for, upon my soul, if I were as miserable as he seems to be, I should think of nothing but driving out Cupid's arrows with a brace of bullets."

As lady Monteith's endeavours to divert her lord from suspecting Mr. Powerscourt's attachment had proved in-

ineffectual, she determined, by that full confidence which Mrs. Evans had recommended, to remove every subject of self-condemnation from her own heart. After having bound his honour by a promise of secrecy, she delivered to him the letters with which I concluded the last Chapter; and she entreated him, as the affair was too serious for levity, to avoid the distressing subject in their future conversations.

Lord Monteith was a stranger to that "green-eyed monster which mocks the meat it feeds on." The preference his lady had recently given him was too avowed, and her conduct, as well as her principles, too correct to raise suspicion even in the heart of a Leontes. On the contrary, Mr. Powerscourt's behaviour excited his warm esteem; and his frank open disposition compelled him to exclaim, "I cannot think, Geraldine, why

“ you preferred me to that noble fellow;
“ I hope he will live to come back to
“ England, that I may thank him for
“ giving me happiness at the expence of
“ his own repose. Let me tell you,
“ very few young fellows of my ac-
“ quaintance would have acted as he
“ has done.”

“ I hope,” said the countess, while
heart-felt pleasure lighted up all the
charms of her intelligent face, “ that I
“ shall have the satisfaction of present-
“ ing two friends to each other, highly
“ deserving of mutual confidence. You
“ see I have requested Henry’s corre-
“ spondence; you, my lord, must permit
“ me to communicate it to you; your
“ superior knowledge of the character of
“ your own sex will enable me to discover
“ whether his travels are conducive
“ to his repose; and you will assist my
“ replies by pointing out such topics as
“ will

“ will prove most effectual in promoting
“ this end, ever remembering that the
“ esteem and gratitude I now feel for him
“ must be subservient to the stronger at-
“ tachment whence they originated.”

Such were the sentiments of lady Monteith; and such is the conduct upon which the muse of history and the muse of fiction alike delight to dwell. The uncorrupted mind avows its divine original, by recurring with secret complacency to the portrait of what is perfect, fair, and good. Though the depravity of modern manners may obtain transient amusement from those highly-coloured scenes of guilt which the judgment condemns, the soul only finds constant gratification in contemplating the lovely pictures of innocence and virtue.

When I recollect that the subsequent events of this history will lead my narrative through many a painful scene, I

seem to shrink with reluctance from the disgusting task of describing systematic villany mining the outworks which decorum and religion have placed around female virtue, while the unsuspecting heart becomes entangled by satanic guile and inbred vanity. I feel that the part most analogous to my taste, as well as to my powers, would be to depicture the amiable features of the human character shaded only by those lighter traits of frailty from which the most perfect standard of human goodness is not exempt. But, knowing that the unchristian morals of the present age strain their affected charity till they embrace vice, while the most glaring enormities are glossed over by delicate subterfuges; and refined liberality expatiates on the goodness of the heart, while its possessor breaks every precept in the decalogue; I feel stimulated by an ardent, though perhaps

perhaps injudicious zeal, to lend my feeble aid to stop the torrent of enthusiastic sentiment which daringly menaces that heaven-erected edifice that is predicted to survive the wreck of worlds.

Impressed with this idea, I conceive it possible to serve the cause of principle, by showing through what devious unsuspected paths the human heart may be led to error; how easily it may, by youthful indiscretion, be hurried down the steep descent, till, Hazael-like, it sinks into the infamy which it once shuddered to name. Yet, retaining too much native purity to be reconciled to its degraded state, and too much sensibility to stifle reflection, it shrinks from life as from an insupportable burden; and the morning which rose in splendour is clouded by insuperable gloom before it attains its meridian brightness.

If in the execution of this design the pencil should fail, let Candour remember the intention, and excuse the unskilful painter. Perhaps the imperfect outline may induce some superior genius, more conversant with life and manners, to execute the instructive subject with all the glowing energy that its importance requires.

I shall gratify my own taste by dwelling a little longer on that part of lady Monteith's history, when, unassailed and happy, she spread delight and comfort all around her, and her own heart derived an allowable gratification from the consciousness of deserved applause. The first four years of her married life were unembittered by restless anxiety, corroding disappointment, or the still keener pangs of self-accusation. But, lest my readers should suppose that I am now falsifying my own maxims, I shall exhibit

hibit a cursory view of that period which, though it did not include any great sorrows or marked deviations from rectitude, still bore some fainter marks of the penalty of Adam.

When the young countess arrived at Monteith, she was astonished at the cruel ravages which time and negligence had made in that venerable pile. Its native magnificence, the sublime features of the adjacent scenery, every spot of which seemed by some traditionary anecdote connected with her lord's family, and the attachment which the peasantry, notwithstanding their extreme wretchedness, expressed for the descendants of their old masters, kindled in her mind an agreeable enthusiasm, and she rejoiced in a distinction which seemed capable of uniting her own individual happiness with the general good. Though she continued to think that lady Made-

lina carried her ideas of hereditary consequence to a ridiculous extent, a generous heart would find a fair field to gratify its noblest passions in the supremacy of a wide domain. She seemed never weary of wandering through the romantic scenery. "Here," said she, as she one day rested on the slope of a green hill, over-hung by a pine-clad precipice, "I will build a neat little village. The houses shall all be white; there shall be a garden to each, and a residence in this agreeable spot shall be the reward conferred upon such of my lord's tenants as seem to fulfil their duties with marked propriety. I will frequently visit them; I will be their legislator, their instructor, their physician, and their friend. They shall look up to me with gratitude, and my own heart shall enjoy the pure recompence of conscious beneficence."

In

In the improvements which she planned at the castle, the same social and benevolent spirit prevailed, though here perhaps it received a more worldly tint from the dangerous approximation of vanity. "These rooms," said she, "if
"embellished in the grand Gothic style,
"will shame the feeble glitter of modern frippery. Every article of furniture shall be massy and substantial,
"and convey an idea of general usefulness rather than a selfish desire of exhibiting the cold enjoyments of unimparted wealth. My lord's fortune is
"ample; I have made to it a considerable
"addition: how infinitely shall I prefer
"spending it upon this spot, which has
"a local claim to our preference, to
"squandering it in the unvarying round
"of a London life! Here, without feeling the pain of competition, expence
"may be justified by the motive of em-

“ ploying industry and diffusing plea-
“ sure. I will cultivate the esteem of
“ all my neighbours by the most winning
“ attentions. The peculiarities which
“ entitle me to pre-eminence shall not
“ give them uneasiness, because they
“ shall be uniformly exerted for their
“ pleasure or amusement. Here, without
“ observation or interruption, I may
“ pursue my plan of influencing lord
“ Monteith’s taste, till it gradually assi-
“ milates to my own. Lady Arabella’s
“ predilection for a London life, and her
“ acknowledged influence over her aunt,
“ prevent me from fearing that my
“ schemes will be frustrated by the pre-
“ sence of those whom I cannot propi-
“ tiate and wish not to offend. Distance
“ may, perhaps, disarm their prejudices;
“ and when personal competition is re-
“ moved, the representative of their fa-
“ mily may receive those commenda-
“ tions.

“ tions to which kindred or friendship
“ never can aspire.”

The plans of lady Monteith would have proved abortive, had she not been assisted by two powerful coadjutors. Lord Monteith's natural disposition was violently disposed to the pursuit of rural sports and athletic exercises. The mountains, lakes, and forests which surrounded his castle, promised the diversions of fishing and hunting in full perfection ; and the neighbouring gentry had endeavoured to enliven a thinly-inhabited country by the establishment of an assembly, a bowling meeting, and a cricket match, which returned at stated intervals. The Monteiths honoured the first-mentioned amusement with their presence very soon after their arrival at the castle ; and, though the company exhibited but a miniature resemblance to the circles in which they had

had lately moved, they both received pleasure from the events of the evening. Two circumstances contributed to his lordship's satisfaction; he felt himself perfectly at ease; and, moreover, he received information, that the neighbouring country afforded what is termed a set of very hearty fellows, and the finest grouse and black game in the kingdom. His pleasure at this intelligence was so great, that while they returned home, he interrupted his lady's observations on the female part of the company, by declaring, that since he found things so agreeable, he really believed he should spend a good deal of time at Monteith. "I think, Geraldine," said he, "I cannot be very dull. What do you think? I shall hunt one day, fish another, go to the bowling-green a third; then there will be a cricket match, and shooting, and public dinners,

“ dinners, and private parties; and then
 “ going to Edinburgh if any particu-
 “ lar business is on foot, and making
 “ excursions through the neighbouring
 “ counties. I declare I begin to think
 “ as your father does, that it will be a
 “ very rational life, and quite as agree-
 “ able as spending all our time in those
 “ state-trappings of which Arabella is
 “ so fond. She said that I should detest
 “ Scotland in a month; but I will con-
 “ vince her that I can be happy any-
 “ where. Don’t you think so too, my
 “ love? You will like to live here,
 “ shall you not?”

“ O! infinitely, I assure you; I was
 “ both surprized and pleased with the
 “ manners of several of the ladies whom
 “ I met at the assembly. They seemed
 “ indeed a little confused and reserved
 “ at first, and certainly they are un-
 “ acquainted with the more refined
 “ modi-

“modifications of politeness; but many
“of them appeared well-informed, and
“I know they will improve upon ac-
“quaintance. I have projected a
“thousand little schemes to inspire con-
“fidence and cordiality. I am sure the
“dear old castle may soon be made
“perfectly comfortable; and I hope,
“my lord, our residence among your
“tenants and dependants will prove an
“essential benefit to them.”

“I shall, certainly, order my steward
“to give them the preference upon
“every occasion which promises a
“lucrative advantage.”

“Is it impossible for us to extend
“our utility further? Could I not en-
“dow a school, and introduce some
“branch of manufacture to employ the
“children and the women? I am told
“that they are extremely uninformed,
“and in some respects uncivilized. I
“have

“ have fancied that this may be owing
“ to the narrow stipend of the presbyter,
“ whose poverty will not permit him to
“ exert that influence over his flock, or
“ to pay them that attention which
“ the interests of morality and religion
“ require. A small addition to his
“ stipend would not be felt by us, and
“ would probably do more for the
“ general improvement of manners in
“ the neighbourhood than would be
“ effected by a much larger expenditure
“ any other way. I see, my lord, you
“ smile ; but allow me as well as your-
“ self to quote my father’s authority.
“ He has frequently observed, that by
“ enlarging Mr. Evans’s sphere of use-
“ fulness, he did an act of public bene-
“ ficence. ‘ I only thought,’ he used to
“ say, ‘ of making one worthy man
“ happy ; but since Mr. Evans has been
“ relieved

“relieved from the pressure of want, he
“has made many men happy, aye and
“worthy too.”

“Why there may be something in
“what sir William observes, provided
“one could but be sure of having an
“Evans to deal with. But I shall have
“no leisure for schemes of this kind;
“so you may amuse yourself with them
“when you have no other employment.
“You may set up schools, portion off
“young girls, and enrich old divines:
“But, remember, no manufactories
“in my neighbourhood.—All our fa-
“mily hate the very name of them.—
“They only encourage a horde of idle
“insolent vagrants, who fly in your face
“upon every occasion.”—

“Not if care be taken to improve
“their morals in proportion to their
“affluence. You see how thinly your
“villages

"villages are peopled, and what extreme poverty the general appearance of the country bespeaks."

"It will be very different when I spend my fortune among them. The repairs of the castle will employ the men."

"But the women and children?"

"O they shall be fed at the castle gate."

"No; let them eat the bread of industry, and enjoy those delights which the active exertion of our native energies always inspires. Sweet is the food which is earned by labour. When you, my lord, pursue health and pleasure in the fields and woods, and return home to taste the repose which is procured by exertion, and to partake of the dainties for which you are indebted to your own toil, you feel this maxim

"true;

“ true ; and your heart will exult at the
“ idea that your provident benevolence
“ has extended similar enjoyments to
“ hundreds, who must long need the
“ protecting care of their benefac-
“ tor, and consequently cannot affect
“ an insolent independence on his
“ bounty.”

Perhaps lord Monteith's principal objections to his lady's schemes were, that he should be involved in some trouble by the execution of them. Her judicious allusion to his favourite pursuits in the preceding speech, and the prospect of the honour being wholly his, while he determined that the difficulties should be exclusively hers ; these reasons, added to some secret ideas that if the plan answered it would be another triumph over the prejudices of his obstinate aunt, procured his acquiescence, and he uttered the words,
“ You

" You shall do as you please, only don't
" tease me about it," just as the chariot
passed over the draw-bridge which led
to the castle.

CH A P. XIX.

Say, should the philosophic mind disdain
That good which makes each humble bosom vain ?
Let school-taught pride dissemble all it can,
These little things are great to little man ;
And wiser he, whose sympathetic mind
Exults in all the good of all mankind.

GOLDSMITH.

THE *sang froid* with which lord Monteith always treated every scheme not immediately connected with his own pleasures, frequently communicated a severe pang to the liberal mind of the countess. Her delicacy was hurt at the gross character of his amusements, and her vanity was piqued by perceiving that the tenaciousness of long indulged habit would not yield to the fascination of her refined accomplishments. Like Desdemona, she was “an excellent musician, and could sing the savageness

ness out of a bear." Her mellifluous voice and sweet-toned harp still retained all their exquisite power of transfusing harmony and delight into her husband's soul, while the early horn or the convivial appointment called him from the syren in vain. But if she sought to lead his attention to the blooming wilderness of sweets planted by her hand, or the scarcely less glowing garland created by her pencil, he instantly recollected some insurmountable engagement which required every moment of his time. She was equally unfortunate if she attempted to interest him in the history of her colony, as she termed her neat little white village; or if, opening the stores of her capacious mind, she sought to discuss some topic of literary taste, her arguments might be brilliant, but unless they were compressed within the strictest rules of Spartan brevity, her
lord

lord was either discovering the wit of his spaniel, or had fallen fast asleep.

Yet his heart was just to her merits, and his tongue so copious in her praise, that he was sometimes inclined to thrust in the agreeable subject without proper preparation. He was considered by all who visited at the castle to be a most perfect paragon of connubial merit; and lady Monteith was as universally pronounced to be a happy woman, with which opinion I am inclined to coincide, notwithstanding that the power of Gyges' magic ring, invariably possessed by all novel writers, has enabled me to peep behind the curtain, and to see the corroding sorrow which a prudent wife will not only conceal from public observation, but even withhold from the knowledge of her bosom friend.

My young female readers, whose notions of nuptial felicity are drawn from

the delusive pages of a circulating library, will start at the harsh tenet which seems to affirm, that a great number of married ladies may assign causes for discontent of a severer nature than what sometimes affected the tranquillity of the blooming Geraldine. Fearful lest they should suppose my doctrine ambiguous, or imagine that the happiness of the lady was wholly owing to the amiable constitution of her own mind, I will very plainly tell them, that, though causes for vexation occasionally occurred, lasting unhappiness in such a situation could only proceed from a discontented, ill-regulated temper, or a perverted judgment, which, instead of forming an estimate of life as it really is, erects a fallacious standard, by which it decides upon what is due to its own deserts, and how far others act as they ought. Reverse this last sentence, and

let the fair scrutinizer of her husband's faults contemplate the errors of her own behaviour; let her recollect the duties she has heedlessly omitted, and the provocations she has undesignedly given; and let her then use the experience she derives from self-examination in her estimate of the conduct of her partner. After making some deductions for the stronger temptations to which the other sex are exposed by their more impetuous passions and blunter feelings, that indulgence of their humours which their manners in early youth permit, and their hereditary notions of superiority derived from Adam; I say, she will then, perhaps, justly refer the apparent neglect or cruel unkindness which had just extorted her tears, to something of business, which "had puddled his clear temper," and sent him home rather with an expectation of having his humours

humours soothed by feminine softness, than of offering at the shrine of feminine susceptibility those attentions which fit the bridal state.

The sensibility of lady Monteith's disposition prevented her from viewing the defects in her lord with the indifference which a mind of common refinement would have experienced. But to the qualities of refinement and sensibility, so generally fatal to female peace, Geraldine united a strong attachment to her husband, natural sweetness of temper, and correct notions of the human character, derived from her early intimacy with Mrs. Evans. The precepts of that excellent mistress, now strengthened by conviction of their propriety, frequently recurred to her mind, prevented her from adopting the language of complaint, opened her eyes to the agreeable part of her situation,

and transferred her attention to what her own duty required from her, till native complacency and habitual affection restored all the sprightly energies of her mind.

Under her presiding influence Monteith castle realized to the idea of every beholder the delightful vision of Spencer's Bower of Bliss, governed by a Una instead of an Acrasia. Magnificence was united with urbanity, hospitality was gilded by elegance, while the presiding enchantress softened her enviable superiority in beauty, wealth, wit, and talents, by the most unassuming condescension, and amiable attention to the accommodation of her guests. If her taste in drawing extorted admiration from those young ladies who were just trying to acquire the rudiments of the science, the pain of that sentiment was immediately softened by her ready offer

of furnishing them with crayons, pencils, subjects to copy superior to what the country afforded, or assistance from the master who occasionally attended her. Her tuneful voice and magic touch could not be imparted; but she had songs and music books at every one's service, and she was very willing to assist in affording all the mechanical aid which that enchanting science admits. She had acquired a knowledge of all fashionable works, and here again instruction and materials only waited to be required. Her library, her conservatory, and her hot-house attracted general attention, and transfused general pleasure, because their respective treasures were not kept merely to gratify the ostentation of the possessor, but were permitted to impart their mental riches and odoriferous sweets to any who wished to read a book or cultivate

an off-set. Adhering to the rule, that beauty is best attired when robed by simple elegance, she had no temptation to be guilty of the temerity of attracting envy by the splendour of her ornaments; and the expence spared from her own dress was employed in judicious presents to those of her young friends whose circumstances would ill support the cost of genteel appearance. To crown this fair assemblage of complacent graces, her exquisitely playful wit, while it dazzled by its brilliancy, prevented by its inoffensive sweetness the most irritable mind from charging it with sarcastic severity.

Her village flourished. She had named it James-town, in honour of her lord, to whose liberality she properly referred every improvement of which she was the directing soul. The neighbouring peasantry were emulous to

to become inhabitants of a spot which possessed so many local advantages; and a spirit of order and improvement was gradually introduced. The melancholy highlander no longer watched his few starved sheep on the bleak mountain, and for want of occupation soothed his sorrows with a bagpipe. One of his younger boys performed that office, while "he earned bread for his infants and health for himself," in shaping the green allies of Monteith, covering the bleak mountains with plantations of Scotch pine and American oak, or digging the foundations of the new buildings, which were continually added to James-town. Beside a neat edifice appropriated to divine worship, it possessed a carpet manufactory, a spinning-room, a village school, and a market-house. Persons properly qualified were placed at the head of each institution, and the

taste of the boys was to be consulted in their future destination, while the occupations of fishing, agriculture, and weaving, solicited their choice. The views of the girls were more circumscribed; but by being early taught the occupations of spinning and knitting, and by having a market opened for the sale of their productions, they were relieved from the burden of indolence, and the cheerless prospect of being a useless weight upon their future husbands, or dependent upon their caprice for every article of support. It was lady Monteth's favourite amusement to take a morning excursion to James-town, and to introduce her female visitants to the young seminary which flourished under her care; and it frequently happened, that some yellow-haired lassie displayed sufficient abilities to induce one of the countess's guests to transfer her from the
task

task of singing at her wheel, to the enviable employment of clear-starching the lady's "kerchiefs;" and helping "to buskin her."

Yet even the exertions of liberal benevolence will not always afford a pure delight; the mind must seek its surest reward in the conscious discharge of an acknowledged duty, and not in the perfect gratitude nor the complete satisfaction of the objects it labours to benefit. Though the inhabitants of Jamestown were selected from the most deserving part of lord Monteith's tenants, it does not follow that they were quite exempt from the failings of humanity. The houses were all neat and comfortable; but as the countess had amused herself by constructing them after various models, it might happen that dame Brown would think gaffer Campbell's the more convenient, while the gaffer

for a similar reason preferred that inhabited by the dame. Lady Monteith, indeed, consented to their exchanging dwellings; but then another inconvenience arose; Margery Bruce complained that a window in dame Brown's house overlooked her, and that if the said window was not walled up, she could not live; for that the dame took her station at that window, and, instead of minding her work, did nothing but watch the conduct of the aggrieved deponent. Dame Brown's rejoinder was, that Margery was suspected to be no better than she should be; that she had lately got a new plaid and kirtle, nobody knew how; and she thought it her duty to mind her goings on, lest her good lady should be imposed upon by an unworthy pretender to her favours. The fair judge found it difficult to decide in a question of such nice morality; and

and the more so, as the village was split into two nearly equal factions, part enlisting under the banners of the watchful Brown, and part espousing the cause of the aggrieved Margery.

Beside the perplexity which cases similar to the above often excited, lady Monteith had to contend with other inconveniencies. The power of local attachment is very strong in people who have passed their lives on one spot, without having had much intercourse with the rest of the world; and she often found that the old Highlander preferred "the hill that lifted him to the storms," to all the advantages which, while untried, his imagination annexed to the sheltered cultivated valley. The manners of the southern strangers, whom the ornamental embellishments of Monteith had introduced among the new colony, did not assimilate with his pre-

c 6 conceived

conceived ideas of submission, œconomy, and self-command. Though invited to partake of the luxuries his new neighbours introduced, his affection for sour-crout and crowdy was insurmountable, and his retired solitary humour shrunk from the loquacious interruptions of society. He frequently found that he had renounced pleasures congenial to his habits, for comforts which he wanted the relish to enjoy; and though respect for his gude laird and lady checked complaint, the smothered discontent often made him meet the inquiries of the latter with the fombrous brow of sorrow instead of the sunshine of joy. "Ye meant it," he would say, "aw' for the beest, but my ain auld cot was mair cumfurtable."

"Is virtue then only a name?" the contemplative Geraldine would sometimes inquire, when ruminating on the untoward

untoward events which often crossed her benevolent schemes. "I have been taught to consider the power of bestowing happiness as the most glorious prerogative which wealth could enjoy. Have the means by which I pursued this end been ill selected, or am I particularly unsuccessful in choosing fit subjects for my design?"

The philosophy of one-and-twenty is not remarkably profound; the views of life are then too highly coloured to admit of the "yellow leaf," which "sober autumn" gradually introduces; and the error then prevalent even in the best-regulated minds is, that the scenes in which themselves are actors furnish exemptions to received rules as to the maxims by which they are to be governed, or the sorrows and disappointments which they are to encounter. Dispassionate experience would have taught

taught lady Monteith, that the very circumstances of the villagers' complaints argued comparative comfort. Pining poverty, deep affliction, and hopeless misery, would have adopted themes for lamentation widely different from the superior convenience of gaffer Campbell's house, the impertinence of dame Brown, the suspicious finery of Margery Bruce, or even the remembrance of four-crou and crowdy, which haunted the "auld" Highlander. Her liberal mind would then have added to the certain satisfaction of a pure intention the exhilarating enjoyment of that moderate success to which all sublunary schemes can alone aspire; and she would have judged of the happiness of her colony, as one of our critics has observed of the sorrows of Pastoral: "That it is a sufficient recommendation of any state, when they have no greater miseries to deplore."

A full

A full conviction of that depressing but infallible truth, that all the good of this world must be blended with evil, would also have preserved lady Monteith from the mortifications to which her love of distinction and universal applause likewise exposed her. Against the shafts which, in spite of repeated obligations, low envy and petty detraction sometimes aimed at her character, sweetness of temper and conscious superiority opposed an inadequate defence. Lady Monteith's letters to her dear Lucy have contained a gentle complaint against ingratitude and the hardships of her own lot; for, though anxiously solicitous to oblige and conciliate her neighbours and acquaintance, she often found her well-meant endeavours mistaken, or repaid by dislike and discontent.

If

If Miss Evans did not always feel the force of her friend's complaints, it must not be ascribed to the diminution of her affection, nor to a want of sympathy. I have already observed, that her mind was of a stronger cast; it was, beside, more intimately acquainted with real calamity.

CHAP. XX.

When thy last breath, ere nature sunk to rest,
Thy meek submission to thy God express'd;
When thy last look, ere thought and feeling fled,
A mingled gleam of hope and triumph shed.

PLEASURES OF MEMORY.

THE reader will remember that I left Mrs. Evans struggling with the violence of a cruel disease, whose reiterated attack seemed to leave little hope of the preservation of her valuable life. She endured her allotted miseries with exemplary patience, and after her sufferings had almost taught her disconsolate friends to wish for her deliverance, she meekly closed a well-spent life, bequeathing the invaluable legacy of her virtues to her beloved daughter.

When lady Monteith received the painful tidings, she was in hourly expectation

pectation of her first confinement; and the utter impossibility of taking such a long journey alone prevented her from exerting her personal services to sooth her Lucy's sorrows. She wrote to her in the tenderest strain of affectionate condolence. "My tears," said she, "shall ever mingle with yours over the sacred remains of my monitress, my foster-mother, my first and most valuable friend! Every good action I perform, every evil I escape, every commendable sentiment that rises in my heart, is owing to her. Her invaluable precepts, sanctioned by experience, now acquire resistless efficacy from the painful reflection that her lips can repeat them no more. I brood over them in my memory as a sacred treasure. Come to me, my dearest Lucy; my present situation, which excludes strangers, demands your tender

“tender soothings, and will suit the privacy of your modest grief. Come, and tell me, while it is fresh in your memory, all that the dying faint said, all that she looked ; and arm my fortitude for the trials which await me, by repeating how she endured months of misery.”

“It was the solemn injunction of my now blessed mother,” said Miss Evans, in her reply, “that I should devote myself to the pious office of soothing the sorrows of my poor father, till time, uniting with religious resignation, should soften his griefs, divert his thoughts from one painful object, and enable him to occupy his leisure hours, once so happily filled, with other amusements ; and she enjoined this duty as the noblest method of proving my affectionate regard for her memory. She even added, that she hoped her
“dis-

“ disembodied spirit might be permitted
“ to witness my perseverance in a mode
“ of conduct, the knowledge of which
“ would perfect her beatitude.

“ Is this the only way by which I can
“ now prove my filial reverence to the
“ best of mothers, and shall I shrink
“ from the important charge? Even
“ your claims upon me, my dearest Ger-
“ raldine, are annihilated by this superior
“ tie. You will rejoice to hear that I
“ am successful. My poor father was
“ surprized into an agony of grief last
“ Sunday. We attended divine service,
“ though he could not attempt to per-
“ form the duty. The sight of my
“ mother’s prayer-book lying upon her
“ vacant seat overpowered him. His
“ stifled sobs were heard by several of
“ the congregation; I knelt by his side,
“ I pressed his revered hand to my lips;
“ I seemed at that moment to have a
“ perfect

" perfect control over my own feelings;
 " I whispered, that his only remaining
 " Lucy would endeavour to supply the
 " place of her whom Providence had
 " removed to a better world. My fa-
 " ther viewed me with serene delight,
 " and, as we walked home, he told me
 " that I was indeed his comforter, and
 " worthy of my excellent mother.

" His praise is a cordial to my heart.
 " While she lived, I thought my con-
 " duct as a daughter not blamable; but
 " now that she is beyond the reach of
 " my attention, I find infinite occasion
 " for self-reproach. The thought that
 " we have paid the last offices to a be-
 " loved object is inconceivably painful.
 " It turns the mind to a retrospective
 " view of its past sentiments; and the
 " remembrance of casual neglects and
 " inadvertent expressions is torture. If
 " thou, my mother! couldst arise from
 " thy

“ thy earthy bed, how would thy Lucy
“ seek to endear thy renewed existence
“ by redoubled attentions and more
“ steady virtues! Pardon, thou dear
“ saint! my imperfect duty; I must
“ enjoy the thought that thou art pre-
“ sent, and conscious of those sighs and
“ tears which I generally conceal from
“ every other eye.

“ Do not think, my dear Geraldine,
“ that I shall ever forget the particulars
“ of her dying moments. The awful
“ remembrance is engraven upon my
“ mind, and no subsequent events can
“ obliterate the impression. I will de-
“ scribe it all to you when we meet; at
“ that time, I trust, both the hearer and
“ the relater will be more equal to the
“ description.

“ The express which has just arrived
“ at the manor-house relieves my heart
“ from many anxieties. You are in
“ safety,

“ safety, my Geraldine; you are blessed
“ with a daughter. Your useful life is
“ spared to your husband, your infant,
“ your father, your friends, your country.
“ It is a general, a public benefit: but
“ let your dejected Lucy lift her grateful
“ voice amid the universal joy, and
“ adore that kind Providence which has
“ preserved her from further deprivations.
“ We shall meet, my beloved friend,
“ and I trust, soon. Sir William has
“ just left us. He is in raptures at this
“ event, though a little inclined to regret
“ that he has not a grandson. It
“ is all for the best, he says; he doubts
“ not, when he sees the pretty creature,
“ he shall be as fond of it as he was of
“ his own Geraldine. ‘ I took it a little
“ hard,’ said he, ‘ that my girl did not
“ come to Powerscourt at the time
“ prefixed; but she will now bring the
“ dear

“ dear infant along with her, and I shall
“ have two pleasures instead of one.’

“ “ Excellent man ! He has laid a
“ scheme, he says, to make us all happy
“ together. He insists that my father
“ and I shall live with you at the manor-
“ house during the time of your ex-
“ pected visit. He says, he can divert Mr.
“ Evans with a hit at backgammon ;
“ and that it will do my spirits good to
“ have a great deal of chat with you.
“ ‘ Don’t be so cast down, my dear god-
“ daughter,’ he continued, ‘ we are all
“ mortal you know ; and your good mo-
“ ther is now much happier than it was
“ even in your power to make her.’

“ I know you love to hear your
“ father’s words repeated with all their
“ genuine benevolence and simplicity.
“ He has truly fulfilled the precept of
“ frequenting the house of mourning.
“ Scarcely a day has passed without his
“ visiting

“visiting us, and his kind solicitude
 “has been attended with considerable
 “advantage. It is impossible to con-
 “verse with him without feeling a por-
 “tion of his tranquil spirit diffused into
 “our own bosoms.

“Adieu, dear lady Monteith ! How
 “I long to see you in your matronly
 “character, to fold your little babe in
 “my arms, and in the contemplation
 “of your deserved felicity to lose for a
 “time the recollection of my own irre-
 “mediable sorrows !”

Lady Monteith's recovery was rapid,
 and she was soon able to introduce the
 young nursery to the eager expectants
 at Powerscourt. Her lord, though ex-
 cessively anxious for her safe journey,
 and doatingly fond of his little moppet,
 would not accompany them. Business
 of the greatest importance prevented
 him ; his engagements at fishing parties,

bowling meetings, and cricket matches, were so numerous, that it was absolutely impossible to break them. "Take the greatest care of yourself, therefore, my dear Geraldine, till I can come and take care of you. You may depend upon it, that I shall set off to see your father act 'the old courtier of the Queen's, the first moment I am disengaged, for I cannot long be happy without you. By the bye I think your father unreasonable in insisting upon having so much of your company."

I pass by sir William's rapturous reception of his daughter, the unaffected transport of the countess, and the tears of mingled pain and pleasure which stole silently down Lucy's faded cheek. I shall not dwell upon the unaffected dignity with which Mr. Evans strove to prevent his sorrows from casting a gloom

gloom over the general joy, nor the repeated marks of grateful veneration and affection which lady Monteith paid to the memory of her deceased friend. We will suppose that, holding by her Lucy's arm, she visited the spot which contained the sacred remains of her lost mistress; that she listened to the interesting narrative of her sickness and death, and, mingling her own tears with those of her amiable companion, repeated the remembered precepts of the guardian of her youth, and enjoined upon herself the imitation of her virtues. The reader will recollect, that to these duties lady Monteith had added an additional bond,—a promise given to the deceased, “that if her friendship could
“avail, her Lucy should never be un-
“happy.”

It will also be remembered, that Mr. Powerscourt frequently wrote to his

cousin, and that lord Monteith was invited to overlook the correspondence. He sincerely wished Henry well; he would rather not have his wife make any man miserable; and when he contrasted his own character with the refinement and intelligence visible in his rival's letters, he felt a little awkward, and inclined to think that her cousin's taste was more congenial to lady Monteith's than his own. All these reasons made him very desirous that Henry should break Cupid's fetters; but since he was confident that he was a very honest fellow, and that nobody could doubt his wife's propriety, he was anxious to escape the trouble of reading the correspondence; for Henry's letters were generally very long, and chiefly about places which he had visited in his travels; beside, lord Monteith was always terribly incommoded by want of leisure. The countess was therefore
left

left to her own observations, which pointed out to her that Henry's increasing vivacity augured well; and, to confirm the satisfaction which his recovered cheerfulness diffused over her mind, his last letter expressed an intention of returning to England by the route of Lower Germany, Switzerland, and Flanders.

It was the encouraging hope which these circumstances supplied, and not the stimulation of feminine curiosity, that induced lady Monteith to develop her friend's sentiments in a point that had hitherto been guarded by the most rigid secrecy. She endeavoured gradually to lead her to the subject, and began by expatiating on the beauties of Monteith. "My lord," said she, "has kindly permitted me to indulge a thousand little whimsies in embellishing a spot eminently indebted to nature.

ture. I have set up temples and alcoves out of number. Some are for solitary musings, others for social parties. There is one, of which I hope, Lucy, you will be very fond, and that we shall spend many happy hours there, when you come to stay with us next autumn. It is formed upon a plan communicated by Henry Powerscourt; he took it from a beautiful ruin in Campania. It is open to the south, and shaded by the loftiest beeches I ever saw. The ivy and woodbines which I have planted round some of the columns grow very good-humouredly. It has besides the advantage of a prospect, to which even the mountain scenery of Powerscourt is flat and uninteresting.'

A crimson blush lighted up Miss Evans's face. "It is," said she, "extremely doubtful whether the state of
" my

"my father's spirits will allow me to
 "spend next autumn with you. But
 "you - mentioned Mr. Powerscourt—
 "I hope he is well. When did you
 "hear of him?"

"Very lately," said the countess,
 drawing out one of his letters. "He
 "writes in excellent spirits, and he
 "gives us hopes of his soon returning
 "to England. I hope, Lucy, you will
 "meet him at Monteith."

"I meet him?" replied Lucy, in in-
 creasing agitation.]

"Yes, my love—I am sure you will
 "have a sincere pleasure in renewing
 "your acquaintance with an old friend.
 "In this very letter he expresses a most
 "lively concern for your loss, and a
 "strong solicitude for your happiness."

"You were always a little inclined
 "to fib," replied Lucy, with a smile
 which revived the idea of her native

significant archness. "It is *your* happiness for which he feels such strong solicitude."

"Read then, and be convinced," said the countess, tendering her the letter.

"No," said Lucy, recollecting herself, and assuming a serious air; "I shall preserve the pertinacity ascribed to my sex, and refuse conviction till you, dear tempter, tell me, what good would arise from my indulging a vain hope, that I excite an interest in Mr. Powerscourt's heart. You know my secret, Geraldine; and let me for ever silence your observations on this subject, by owning that I know his. If I have not your charms to attract his affection, I have at least fortitude to avoid his contempt. His regret at losing the woman of his choice shall not be aggravated by compassion for
"a love-

“ a love-lorn girl, who, betrayed by
 “ inexperience to unsolicited love, pur-
 “ sues him with the offer of an unac-
 “ cepted heart.”

“ I admire your lovely pride,” said
 the countess. “ Yet my friend’s deli-
 “ cacy need not be hurt when I declare,
 “ that, as nothing but a pre-attachment
 “ would have made me insensible to
 “ Henry’s merits, it is my most earnest
 “ wish that she may reward them.”

“ How reward them, lady Monteith ?
 “ Can a forced alliance (and pity is com-
 “ pulsion to a noble mind) reward the
 “ generous, firm, self-denying virtues
 “ of Harry Powerscourt ? Shall the
 “ man who could renounce a blessing
 “ his whole soul was ardent to possess,
 “ even when by that renunciation he
 “ exposed himself to the anger of the
 “ friend he best loved, be linked to a
 “ woman who found the ties of delicacy

“too weak to restrain her selfish preference?”

“Can a lively sensibility of superior goodness efface the delicacy of your character? No, my Lucy, it gives to it a more interesting attraction. Yet I perfectly agree with you, that it ought to be kept secret from the object of your regard; for, till Henry is just to your merits, even he is unworthy of you.”

“And is he not, in your sense of the word, unjust?”

“I own that his heart was bestowed where its value was less esteemed; but since that attachment is now utterly at an end——”

“Go on, my sweet flatterer, and say in plain terms, Now that I am married, do you, Lucy, come and meet the agreeable bachelor at Monteith: throw

“ throw yourself in his way, study his
“ humours, and try to persuade him to
“ take a little notice of you.—No,
“ Geraldine; the man who has loved
“ you will not easily be caught by other
“ lures; and, dearly as I regard you, I
“ shall be too tenacious of my own
“ right of pre-eminence to admit of your
“ participation of my husband’s heart.”

“ His return to England,” replied
the countess, “ is a clear proof that
“ he can view me with indifference.
“ Must the man who has been un-
“ fortunate in his first choice neces-
“ sarily remain for ever after insensi-
“ ble to female merit? Surely, Lucy,
“ that romantic idea was never incul-
“ cated by your mother’s precepts.”

“ Such a change is not absolutely
“ impossible; but highly improbable
“ in the present instance. Observe the
“ line of conduct which I mean steadily

“ to pursue ; and I conjure you by our
“ friendship, and your wishes for my
“ happiness do not attempt to make
“ me deviate from it. I shall in the
“ first place persist in my endeavours to
“ conquer a preference which promises
“ to be always irreconcilable with my
“ peace ; and, as a means to forward this
“ desirable end, neither in your letters
“ nor your conversation do you, my Ge-
“ raldine, introduce the painful theme.
“ I will neither avoid nor seek Mr.
“ Powerfcourt ; I will neither appear
“ anxious to please, nor fearful to offend
“ him. Whatever progress I make in
“ his affections shall be all in my own
“ natural character. Do you exert your
“ penetration, and warn me when I de-
“ part from this line of conduct. Be
“ as jealous of my delicacy as you
“ would of your own ; and if ever my
“ countenance betrays in his presence
“ the

“ the perturbation of my mind, warn
“ me of the danger of exciting my own
“ future remorse ; and let me hasten
“ back to hide my folly in this solitude,
“ where my mind shall soon regain its
“ lost energy by the contemplation of
“ my mother’s virtues.”

She then presented lady Monteith with a copy of verses. “ Read,” said she, “ this little tribute to filial duty, which burst from my heart during my lonely walk last night. It is not finished, but it will convince you that I am capable of more worthy feelings than the weak regrets of unrequited love.” So saying, she suddenly left the countess, who with mingled admiration and regret perused the following fragment :

Still will I wander through these moss-grown
bowers,
And scent the grateful fragrance of these flowers ;

Still

Still will I pace the paths her footsteps press'd,
Still watch the favour'd plants her culture bless'd ;
While the loud throftle warbling fills the grove,
Mix'd with the murmurs of the melting dove.

Here, when the sun's declining car allows
A deeper shade to hover o'er the boughs,
Sweet Philomel, who shunn'd the " garish day,"
Awakes th' enamoured echoes with her lay ;
O Bird ! best darling of the Muse, again
Pour on my pensive ear that thrilling strain ;
Again repeat it !—Fancy shall prolong
Thy notes, and give expression to thy song ;
Tell what deep swells describe parental woe,
For sever'd love what softer descants flow ;
Sing on—the tender sympathy I feel,
For, as around me night's dun shadows steal,
Keen retrospection every sense employs,
And gives a substance to departed joys.
I see thy form, my honour'd mother ! glide
Wrapt in a filmy mist, and scarce descried ;
I turn delighted, and again rejoice
In the known cadence of thy silver voice.
O ! ever-lov'd, rever'd, lamented, say,
From what far region hast thou wing'd thy way ?
Charg'd with what kind injunction art thou come
To turn my footsteps from the path-worn tomb ?
Appear'st

Appear'st thou in displeasure, to upbraid
Some broken promise, or some rite unpaid ;
Or hast thou journey'd to this dark terrene
To tell the secrets of the world unseen ?—
'Tis silence all—Light zephyrs wave the trees,—
'Twas but the glancing boughs, and rising breeze ;
The faint impression fades upon my brain,
The vision closes, but my griefs remain !

CH A P. XXI.

Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find :
With secret course, while no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.

GOLDSMITH.

AMONG the various means employed by Providence to soften human calamity, none are more eminently beneficial than the opiates which time administers to grief. It was finely observed by a novelist, (not one of the present school,) that none but the guilty are long and completely miserable. In vain does the soul, while labouring under the strong paroxysms of calamity or disappointment, renounce all acquaintance with terrestrial pleasures, and, like the Hebrew patriarch, resolve to "go down
to

to the grave mourning." Time will soften the poignancy of regret; a Benjamin may arise to divert affection from the grave of Joseph, and the tears of anguish may be converted to those of joy. This supposition, however, premises that the grief did not originate in the depravity of the sufferer. Intervening years may render vice callous or penitent; but the impenetrability of one state, and the apprehensiveness of the other, are alike irreconcilable with the idea of happiness. It has been long acknowledged, that, though the loss of a beloved friend seems at first the most insupportable of all calamities, even affectionate minds sooner acquiesce in such deprivations, than they do in many other kinds of distress. This may sometimes be accounted for upon religious principles; but even when it does not own such exalted motives, it
seems

seems severe to ascribe it to levity of disposition. Existing in the midst of a dying world, we should rather employ our faculties in extracting improvement from scenes of mortality, than waste them in unavailing regret. The bond of friendship is not, indeed, dissolved by death; yet it does not impose incessant woe on the survivor, who must soon journey through the same dark valley which the lamented object has just explored.

Strengthened by such considerations, still further enforced by the precepts and example of her father, Miss Evans's grief gradually subsided into the tranquil cheerfulness which naturally belonged to her character. Her affection for her mother showed itself in a tender attachment to her memory, and to every subject connected with it; in a steady imitation of her virtues, and a faithful ob-
servance

servance of her precepts. The high heroic tone of her mind would have been wounded by a supposition, that love was more invulnerable than filial grief; and she certainly so far subdued her early preference, as to render it very little troublesome either to herself or her friends. It did not incapacitate her for any duties, nor did it absorb any of her agreeable properties. She visited Monteith in a few months after her mother's death, and delighted all who saw her with her good sense and agreeable vivacity. She even met Mr. Powerscourt without betraying her secret emotion to the most scrutinizing eye. She received him without either discovering strong transport or adopting an artificial reserve: and she bade him adieu with a voice so little tremulous, that even lady Monteith could scarcely detect her latent emotion.

It

It may be for the advantage of all love-sick young ladies, who sit under woodbine bowers or shady beeches, or who walk by moonlight to hear nightingales and waterfalls, to learn by what means Miss Evans was enabled to make so respectable a defence against the purblind archer. In the first place, she was constantly employed; in the second, she never indulged in the dangerous pleasure of dwelling on the name and merits of her beloved, either in her conversation or in her letters, nor did she ever allow herself to complain of her hard lot. To prevent such repining, she often visited the abodes of real misery, and her attention was directed to that course of study which is the reverse of sentimental refinement.

Mr. Powerscourt's short residence at Monteith did not indicate a revival of that strong attachment to his lovely
cousin

cousin which had given him so much unhappiness. He had found absence a grand specific. Change of scene, and interesting objects of pursuit, had counteracted the effect of love upon a mind, which, though naturally calm and contemplative, was remarkably susceptible of deep impressions, and addicted to a pensive cast of thought. He had derived still further advantages from his travels. His capacious understanding was eminently disposed to receive all the improvement which an extensive view of men and things could afford. Habits of society wore off his natural reserve; and, as his youthful awkwardness was owing to uncommon diffidence, the same circumstances which inspired a modest consciousness in his own powers, gave grace to his person and elegance to his address. Thus improved, Miss Evans might have found her determined

mined stoicism an ineffectual defence, if it had been long exposed to so powerful an assailant. It may, on the other hand, be asked, if Miss Evans's merit was not equally calculated to convince Henry, that female attractions may fascinate in more than one form. I readily assent to the suggestion; but the presence of lady Monteith did not admit the fair display of Lucy's powers; and that young lady contributed to her own defeat, by continually suspecting that her friend led the discourse to such a topic purposely to call her out, and that such or such an amusement was projected with a design to leave her tête-à-tête with Mr. Powerscourt. Her indignation at these ideas was so warm, that instead of being peculiarly brilliant, her determination to avoid being singular could not prevent her from being uncommonly reserved.

Henry,

Henry, on the other hand, conscious of the fragility of new-formed resolutions, was prevented from attending to the attractions of Miss Evans by a scrupulous watchfulness over his own heart, lest it should deviate from those limits which he had prescribed, in order to prevent lady Monteith from occupying more of his thoughts than common admiration justified. He found, upon this visit, that her wit and beauty were her least attractions. As a wife, as a mother, how admirable!—how enchanting as the presiding directress of a large family!—how intelligent in her pleasures!—how prudent in her benevolence! Lord Monteith was uncommonly attentive to him, and showed a strong desire to contract a friendly intimacy. He talked of the pleasures of the chace, of the agreeable society of many gay careless souls with whom he spent several
happy

happy hours. Good heavens! could the husband of Geraldine relish such low amusements, and be worthy of her? This thought kept Henry awake one whole night, and the next morning he determined to set off on a tour to the Hebrides. Lord Monteith earnestly pressed him to take his castle in his return, and tempted him by offering to introduce him to a party who proposed spending a month in hunting the red deer among the Grampian hills. Mr. Powerscourt determined to avoid every opportunity of drawing comparisons dangerous to his integrity, and proposed going to Ireland in his way back, with an intention of paying a long-intended visit to a particular friend.

The attachment of the Monteiths to their northern residence seemed to increase. My lord was sometimes reluctantly forced by the unavoidable
pressure

pressure of parliamentary business to visit London, and the countess generally embraced that opportunity of paying her duty at Powerscourt. She once accompanied her lord to London, where lady Arabella, who was still aspiring to the character of a first-rate toast, was terrified at the appearance of rivalry with which the undiminished charms of her lovely sister threatened her, even in her own domain. Probably this visit would have proved fatal to all the fond terms of affection which lady Arabella's letters had constantly expressed, had not family harmony been preserved by the alarming illness of lady Monteith's eldest daughter who was left in Scotland, which summoned the affrighted mother from the haunts of pleasure to the bed of pain. The child soon recovered under her watchful eye, and, though not insensible to the blandishments of adulation and

the seductions of pleasure, the grateful heart of Geraldine forgot the loss of promised amusement in the transporting idea of the restoration of her darling.

She was by this time the mother of three daughters, all promising and lovely. The repeated disappointment of having male issue somewhat disconcerted her lord, yet the chagrin was not so predominant as to cause any diminution in his attachment to his lady. Experience taught him that her unvaried sweetness was necessary to his happiness; and it never occurred to him, that his peculiar pleasures and pursuits were any impediments to hers. With too little reflection ever to attend to his own defects, and too little judgment to appreciate Geraldine's refined excellence, he gave an unqualified assent to the assertions of his acquaintance, and believed himself not only

only a very happy, but also a very excellent husband: and who among the lords of the creation will controvert that opinion, when they hear that his lady never contradicted him, and never found fault?

I shall leave to the sentimental part of my readers the task of commenting on the selfishness and inelegance of lord Monteith's character; for, doubtless, they have long ago observed, that his mind was cast in too gross a mould to form the proper counterpart of Geraldine's; and I am ready to allow, that the dissimilarity must be fatal to that pure felicity, the result of a perfect congeniality in taste and sentiment, which is always the reward of heroes and heroines, and is sometimes realized on the stage of life. Such marked disproportion affords an unanswerable argument to dissuade a young lady of strong feeling

E 2

from

from accepting an otherwise unexceptionable offer ; but since no law, either human or divine, permits it to dissolve the marriage-bond, it cannot be urged as an excuse for married wretchedness, unless some moral defect or painful peculiarity in temper be superadded. Sensibility may wish that the stock of mutual happiness may receive every agreeable addition ; but judgment will look abroad, and, estimating its own real situation by adverting to the lot of others, will find reasons for content, particularly if humility whisper somewhat of its own conscious deficiencies. I speak of general wretchedness, not of a momentary pang ; of a confirmed train of thinking, not of a sudden reflection which reason examines and rejects.

Long before the period of which I am now treating, lady Monteith had abandoned the impracticable scheme of
arraying

arraying Asteon in the vestments of Apollo. The discovery was painful to her vanity, which had taught her credulity to believe, that love and beauty are the true alchymists that can transmute the basest metals into the purest gold. But the sanguine hopes of youth do not sink under one disappointment. Her lord possessed many good qualities, and the uncontrolled power which he gave her over his fortune allowed her to execute every scheme that her liberality suggested, and pursue her own taste in its fullest extent, provided she spared him the irksome task of being obliged to pay attention to her plans. As to any idea of being impeded in the execution of his own, the yielding gentleness of lady Monteith preserved her from making the mad attempt, which could only have been compared to "drinking up Eisel, or eating a crocodile."

If the suggestions of latent pride, or, to call it by its softer name, conscious superiority, sometimes led her to think that she might have made a more congenial choice, returning tenderness bade her start from the injurious suggestion, and fly to her colony or her plantations, which, presenting the idea of her lord's indulgence, never failed to inspire complacency. The future was an ample field for hope, and she filled it with the most agreeable images. She determined, by strictly attending to the education of her daughters, to bend their ductile minds to such pursuits as would enable her to find those colloquial pleasures in her maternal character, which had been withheld from her connubial portion.

Her thoughts were sometimes diverted from her favourite employment of framing such a plan of education as
should

should insure success, to the contemplation of her Lucy's approaching happiness, which every day rendered more probable. Henry now generally resided at Powerscourt. His filial attentions and agreeable manners enlivened sir William's declining years; and his frequent opportunities of observing Miss Evans convinced the countess that her beloved friend would gradually make the conquest so important to her repose, in the manner which her strict sense of delicacy and propriety required.

Bending under the enfeebling load of time, but still tranquil, social, and benevolent, the visits of his beloved daughter seemed to renew sir William Powerscourt's frail existence. Her countenance always bespoke happiness, and he forgave the negligent inadvertencies visible in lord Monteith's behaviour to himself. "Old men and young lords,"

said he, "can't be expected to suit one
"another ; but he is kind to my child,
"and that is sufficient."

I have now described those scenes of lady Monteith's life, in which, judging by the proper estimate of terrestrial good, she might be termed innocent and happy. An artful seducer combining with her master-passion reversed the pleasing prospects, and produced scenes which the following pages will develop. While I prosecute my arduous, and perhaps unpopular task, I rely on the lenity of those who sincerely regret the alarming relaxation of principle that too surely discriminates a declining age ; and I anticipate the candid allowances which they will make for any incidental defects in a well-meant endeavour to point out the tendency of several opinions now too generally diffused through every rank in society.

CHAP. XXII.

When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from every part,
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with swordknots swordknots
strive,

Beaus banish beaus, and coaches coaches drive.

POPE.

WHILE lady Monteith exerted all the powers of her mind to enjoy fame and to diffuse happiness, and her beloved Lucy Evans pursued the humbler but surer path of conscientiously endeavouring to discharge her duty to God and man, lady Arabella Macdonald, already embarked on the sea of gaiety and dissipation, applied all her thoughts to the attainment of two doubtful blessings, a husband and a coronet.

Disinterested love is always a very favourite topic with youth and beauty.

E 5

After

After a sly observation, that pretty little Geraldine might owe some attractions to Powerscourt manor, she entreated that her aunt would cautiously suppress the communication of her intended liberality; and, by hinting that jointures always reverted to the family from which they were granted, leave her to depend upon her own radiant eyes for procuring a splendid establishment. Oroondates himself must feel some increase of rapture, if, while his bride curtesied to him after the performance of the marriage ceremony, she at the same time whispered to him, that she was the acknowledged heiress of four thousand a year. But if lady Arabella's husband had any spark of Oroondates' gallantry, his rapture would solely result from the delicate reserve of the lady, and he would undoubtedly reply, "Wealth cannot add
" to the transport I feel in calling you

“ mine. Employ the gaudy toys you
“ mention in whatever way you please ;
“ they will be no otherwise welcome to
“ me, than as they promote your satis-
“ faction ; for your heart is the only
“ treasure which I wish to retain.”

In ages of very remote antiquity lovers might talk in this style ; but as all authentic memorials of these periods are unhappily lost, sceptics are inclined to doubt the actual existence of such very disinterested heroism. Poor lady Arabella found that the swains who flourished in the close of the eighteenth century were of a very different order of beings. Perceiving that the first London winter produced more starers than adorers, she set out for Bath. Here Cupid in vain continued to shoot his arrows from her eyes ; the apathy of dissipation, more invulnerable than the shield of Minerva, defended the intended victims. Idle-

ness is said to be the mother of Love ; but not the idleness of public places. The lounging beaux, as they sauntered arm in arm along the rooms, occasionally cheered her spirits with a passing " How " d'ye do," and then joined in protesting, " that she was an immense fine girl, and " that it was a shame her father had not " left her a fortune." The conversation generally concluded with a laugh at the repulsive state of lady Madelina, which nobody seemed willing to infringe.

Lady Arabella now determined to try the effect of rural scenes ; and, having chosen the then fashionable retirement of Brighton as the probable residence of the vagrant loves, she persuaded lady Madelina, who went to Bath to fix a flying gout, that her complaint was certainly scorbutic, for which sea-bathing was the only specific ; and there at last the expected lover appeared in the form
of

of Sir Phelim O'Connaught, a very personable and very assiduous Irish gentleman of good family, and unquestionable honour. Though lady Arabella had protested that she never would surrender to any thing beneath a coronet, Sir Phelim's addresses were so perfectly rhapsodical, that her heart seemed to flutter, when at this critical period its tranquillity was re-established by the appearance of some very ungenteel company,—I mean, a couple of sheriff's officers. Sir Phelim was so shocked at the audacity of such low villains intruding upon the haunts of gentlemen, that he was never seen abroad after their arrival. It afterwards appeared, that his attachment was not so perfectly disinterested as has been supposed; for that he had acquired some knowledge of the disposal of lady Madelina's jointure.

Lady

Lady Arabella joined in the laugh against her quondam adorer, and declared, that though certainly he was very specious, she had found him out in an instant, and was determined to divert herself with the fellow's ridiculous ways. She also added, that this was another proof how prudent it was in ladies of fortune to *conceal* their expectations, for *avowed* wealth was always exposed to degrading solicitations.

The winter campaign opened with eclat. A noble earl, whose affairs were a little deranged, laid siege in form, and the contest seemed to predict a happy issue, had not lady Madelina put the young general prematurely to the rout by inquiring after his rent-roll. Poor Arabella felt a little piqued; but no matter;—these were her happiest days;—she loved liberty, detested restraint, and danced,

danced, laughed, and visited more than ever.

The defection of the noble earl was repaired by the attendance of two admirers, a viscount and a private gentleman, who started in the career of honourable love at the same instant. Hitherto her ladyship had been rather unfortunate in the character of her adorers; but her indecision in the present instance proved that she was actuated by motives widely different from the desire of conjugal happiness. Lord Fitzosborne was an emaciated victim to licentious pursuits; Mr. Stanley was a youth of great promise, educated under the auspices of a worthy father. The aim of the former was to repair his shattered fortune, and to gratify his selfish vanity by exhibiting to the world a fine young woman in the character of his wife. The latter sought domestic tranquillity: the
beauty

beauty of lady Arabella had caught his eye ; her reported expectations far exceeded what his father would require in pecuniary affairs ; and, supposing that a young woman must imbibe every virtue under the auspices of a person of lady Madelina's strict decorum, he called her levity innocent gaiety, her affectation sprightliness of manner ; and, sincerely worshipping the image he had set up, he ardently solicited his charmer's heart. Though my discoveries have enabled my sagacious readers to conclude, that the unfortunate Stanley was in pursuit of a nonentity, an impassioned lover could not perceive that nothing but the adverse weight of a coronet prevented the nodding scale from preponderating in his favour. True to the first object of her youthful desires, even the unworthiness of the giver could not in her idea invalidate the gift. But the progress of
my

my history now calls me from the portraiture of fashionable love to the definition of polite friendship.

Though lady Arabella had very little of the sentimental in her character, she enjoyed the blessing of a bosom friend. Her acquaintance with Miss Campley commenced at her first arrival in London. They dressed in the same uniform, went to the same parties, laughed at the same quizzes, and flirted with the same beaus. But Miss Campley, being the uncontrolled mistress of her own actions, soared to a character which some restrictions of lady Madelina's prevented her niece from adopting; I mean, that of a dasher. She drove four in hand, laid wagers, ran in debt, played at Pharo, and, though infinitely inferior to her friend in beauty, certainly laid claim to greater taste and spirit.

As

As the ladies had never interfered in each other's conquests, their friendship was fixed as adamant. To own the truth, conquest and Harriet Campley were no longer synonymous terms. The gentlemen had long been more desirous of winning her money than her heart; and even few knight-errants would have possessed sufficient courage and disinterested generosity, to rescue a distressed damsel from the harpy talons of the law at the risk of their own certain ruin.

As the prospect of a splendid establishment became less probable, Miss Campley's creditors were more clamorous; and, though she professed herself highly delighted with the expected eclat of an execution, her haggard countenance betrayed an agonized mind. The period of lady Arabella's double triumph proved the crisis of her fate; and the unexpected

unexpected death of an only brother changed her prospects from the gloom of a prison to pleasure and affluence.

Lord Fitzosborne had known Miss Campley from her earliest youth; he had often been at her parties, and had won her money without wishing for a further connexion; but she now struck him in a much more interesting point of view. I do not mean to insinuate, that he thought her mourning was particularly becoming, and suited to her complexion; his lordship's taste led him to pursue more solid advantages than a set of features can promise. He was an excellent calculator; and, though he too well understood the character of his present mistress, to fear the ultimate success of his rival, he laid so much stress upon the attractions of old dowagers, and the frailty of vows of widowhood, that he considered three thousand a-year in immediate

mediate possession as better than four thousand in reversion. But while he continued rather unresolved, the gout fixed in lady Madelina's foot, and her physician congratulated her upon an event which would infallibly add at least twenty years to her life. His lordship waited for no other inducement to pay his devoirs at the shrine of the other divinity. Miss Campley's yielding gentleness forgave past slights; and in less than a month lady Arabella received bride-cake and favours from the viscountess Fitzosborne.

This certainly was provoking; but the faithful Stanley was a sure resource. Here again lady Arabella's evil genius met her to blast her projects. Mr. Stanley was not quite so much in love as to lose all his powers of observation. His charmer's conduct had been at least doubtful. The encouraging smiles which
had

had beamed full upon him ever since the viscount's dereliction, were too suspicious to be completely fascinating; and he thought a journey into the country would at least show his mistress, that he was not one of Cupid's tame votaries. In his take-leave visit he made some further discoveries into her ladyship's character; and while he made his final bow, his regret at his disappointment was softened by the consciousness of escaping that worst of evils, a dissipated unprincipled wife.

Lady Arabella had charming spirits. She laughed at the vanity of the men, creatures who supposed themselves of consequence; and, intimating that though she had private reasons for rejecting Lord Fitzosborne, they were not of a nature to influence her dearest Harriet's choice, she waited with impatience for the return of the bride and
bridegroom

bridegroom to town. She flew to make the wedding visit, gave in her card, was admitted, and congratulated the happy pair in terms equally sincere with the professions of esteem and friendship which she received in return. The viscountess now insisted that she should be her constant visitor, and strongly urged her not to mope herself at home during her aunt's confinement. Lady Arabella declared, that her ladyship was the only good Christian that she had talked to for a long time ; and that it really would be charity to take her out of the sphere of flannels and fomentations. They agreed to go to every place where there was any thing to be seen. Lady Fitzosborne declared with a smile, that even if her lord was sometimes of the party she had a soul too capacious for jealousy ; and her equally liberal friend, with a loud laugh, observed, that she was not yet

yet arrived at the age of envy and her last prayers. Lady Fitzosborne's speech needs no explanation; but the wit of lady Arabella's retort consisted in an allusion to the circumstance of her dear friend's being ten years older than herself.

The friends were constantly together, except when the mysteries of Pharo imposed a temporary separation. I have already said, that lady Madelina's severe notions restricted some of her niece's propensities; but this was not the only thing that prevented Arabella from being caught in that ruinous vortex from whose fatal contact peace and honour must never hope to escape. Lord Fitzosborne was, since his marriage, become a man of character, a lover of decorum, and a considerate observer of pecuniary advantages. Fortune seldom bestows her gifts singly,
and

and since her accession to her brother's estate, his lady had an amazing run of luck. She was not only able to discharge her own debts of honour, but to pay some of his; and this was the only circumstance which could at all reconcile his notions of propriety with her infraction of the laws of her country. His thoughts were now turned to the advantageous establishment of his brother Edward Fitzosborne, who had resided many years abroad upon the limited portion of a younger son. His lordship had been assured by many respectable travellers, that this young gentleman was an honour to his name, possessed of elegant manners, uncommon erudition, and an irreproachable character: that he appeared in the first circles, corresponded with the first literary characters of the age,^t and was fitted to move in the most exalted sphere.

The

The noble viscount's fraternal tenderness yearned at the recital. He determined to send for him to England, to get him into parliament, to push him in the world, and to marry him to a fortune. It was with a reference to this design that he prohibited the viscountess from initiating her friend in her private mysteries.

Mr. Fitzosborne received his brother's summons to England with regret, and begged that he might be permitted to remain at Paris, where he was just then contemplating the sublime spectacle of a great nation emancipating itself from the fetters of tyranny and superstition. It was, he said, his wish to continue abroad, to watch the progress of events that would enlarge his mind, and render him still worthier of the office of a British legislator. The peer, whose ideas were equally liberal,

granted the request; and, depending upon his own watchfulness, and the chicanery of his lady, to prevent the glittering gold-fish that he wished to entrap from escaping their net, he permitted Mr. Fitzosborne to prosecute his studies, till the coercive measures which democracy was compelled to adopt obliged even the lovers of freedom to take shelter in the legal despotism of Old England.

CHAP. XXIII.

—'Tis not impossible
But one, the wicked'st caitiff on the ground,
May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute,
As Angelo; even so may Angelo
In all his dressings, characts, titles, forms,
Be an arch villain.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY ARABELLA was with her dear Harriet when Mr. Fitzosborne unexpectedly arrived. He had narrowly escaped the guillotine, had passed the sea in a fishing-boat, and had encountered so many perils, that his admiration of that meretricious liberty whose distinguishing code is equality of wretchedness, was rather abated. "Hair-breadth 'scapes" are very interesting to most ladies, and Mr. Fitzosborne's powers of recitation were unrivalled. His person

son had every charm, his manner every advantage. Lady Arabella looked, listened, admired, and went home vastly rejoiced, that such a delightful young man had escaped the odious democrats.

The next morning, at an early hour, lady Fitzosborne rushed into her friend's dressing-room. "Enchanting news! " my dearest Bella," said she; " we " shall never more be distressed for " want of a cecisbeo. My lord has " asked Edward to live with us till he " forms an establishment of his own. " Is not he a divine fellow? And this " morning he looks more resistless than " ever. Such spirit! such information! " It would have been a shame to have " had him confounded with a parcel of " emigrant desperadoes. He spoke " very fine things of you, my dear; he " seems quite struck, I assure you. If " you were but a little more Greek in " your drapery, he declared, you would " have

“ have put him in mind of La Liberté
 “ on the day of deification, who was
 “ the handsomest courtesan in all
 “ Paris.

“ But, bless me !” continued the
 British peeress, looking at her watch,
 “ how I trifle. I vow I have fifty
 “ visits to make this morning. Good
 “ bye ! I shall call upon you for the
 “ opera this evening. I long to show
 “ Edward the new house. O, I declare
 “ I have not had the humanity to in-
 “ quire after *aunt*y ; but I can’t stay to
 “ hear now. You’ll tell me to-night all
 “ the process of the foot, and the doctor.
 “ Sparkle, my love : Edward is amaz-
 “ ingly fond of wit.”

Pity is said to be near akin to Love :
 and when blended with admiration, and
 inspired by the idea of awakening reci-
 procal sentiments in the bosom of an-
 other, it may certainly be styled the

parent of the soft infatuation. Though philosophy was Mr. Fitzosborne's chief forte, he did not belong to the school of Diogenes. One prime article in his creed was, that an adept did not study to less advantage for possessing the good things of this life. Indeed, as his views were not very clear on the subject of a future state, he considered it to be his bounden duty to embrace all the advantages which the present afforded. Gentlemen of his principles do not mean by their general declamations in favour of liberality, honour, and philosophical equanimity, to convey the precise idea, that such qualities are indispensably requisite in their own characters : for they know, that the exterior resemblance exactly answers the same end. Superficial observers (and the major part of mankind belong to this class) will give you credit for possessing

fessing a virtue, provided you are
 loud in your censures of an opposite
 vice. Good notions of public liberty
 give the licence which permits you to
 be a private tyrant. The daring atheist
 and sophisticating sceptic may alike
 shelter under the veil of religious mode-
 ration: and provided the words honour,
 sentiment, and philanthropy, be upon
 your tongue, you may disturb the repose
 of mankind, either individually or col-
 lectively, with impunity.

To illustrate the analogy in the pre-
 sent instance: Could the enlarged soul
 of Edward Fitzosborne have heard the
 shameful tale of mercenary indigence
 concealing disgust under the mask of
 admiration to entrap the wealth of ina-
 nity into a degrading connexion, with-
 out expressing the most generous emo-
 tion? How would his strong feelings
 have revolted at the sight of those sordid

shackles which militated against the natural liberty of man, and the idea of that *confirmed habit* of dissimulation which annihilated his supposed inherent perfection. He could certainly have been very eloquent upon these themes, if they referred to the conduct of a methodist or a formalist; but when applied to his own concerns it was soon adjusted. The girl wanted a husband, the gentleman a fortune; the balance, therefore, was as nicely trimmed as the most equalizing spirit could desire. This consideration might have been further useful, as it necessarily dissolved all ties of gratitude; but Mr. Fitz-osborne had long before discovered, that private gratitude is inconsistent with public virtue.

Lady Arabella had no doubt that her wit and beauty held out sufficient attractions to a gentleman so professedly dis-

disinterested as her new admirer (for he assumed that character in a few days); and she did not even attempt to misconstrue his behaviour, or to disguise the pleasure which she received from his addresses. Fitzosborne was not a sensualist. Beauty was to him a mere abstract quality, particularly when associated to the idea of a wife. He had been too long accustomed to the coruscations of real genius, to bestow more than a languid smile on lady Arabella's jejune *bons mots*. Even that languid smile was soon converted into saturnine silence. Her character was too superficial to interest his attention. He discovered her foibles, detected her artifices, and despised her understanding, in the first month of his courtship. She was too easy a conquest for his ambition; and nothing but the reluctance which he felt at the thought of being de-

F 5 pendent

pendent upon his brother could have reconciled him to the idea of an alliance.

Perceiving her heart irredeemably enthralled, (though in this opinion he was somewhat duped by his own vanity,) he began to act the preconcerted part. He was now no longer the assiduous lover, but the man of firm honour and inviolable integrity, incapable of betraying unsuspecting innocence, or of seducing a young lady from the duty which she owed to the protecting kindness of a venerable relation. Lady Arabella unwarily acknowledged, that her aunt was inclined to suspect a mercenary motive for his addresses, and this drew from him an exordium on the purity and disinterestedness of his attachment, with a declaration, that though it would glow in his breast with unabated fervour, yet he had rather perish the untimely victim
of

of despair, than justify lady Madelina's sentiments by a departure from that strict honour which had ever been the ruling principle of his life. "No!" "lady Arabella," continued he, while the astonished lady was incapable of interrupting him, "the enlightened mind "needs no other incentive than conscious "rectitude to enable it always to act as "it ought. I can support penury, exile, "or even the loss of you; but I cannot "support disgrace. Lady Madelina has "injured me by her unjust suspicions. "She has cruelly striven to infuse her "own narrow prejudices into a mind "which I hoped was incapable of an "illiberal doubt. How can I be sure "that she has not succeeded? Your "eyes, your manner, evince less confidence than they were wont: and my "alarmed heart anticipates the gloomy "period, when reserve and suspicion

6

" shall

“ shall chill the sentiments of pure, ingenuous, disinterested love. Sooner than such mischiefs shall fall upon me, I will resign you, madam, and even at this moment tear myself from you for ever.”

“ I cannot see for what reason,” returned the lady, whom this vehement oratory had driven from her usual resource of playing with her fan or adjusting her dress; “ I declare, Mr. Fitzosborne, I can’t bear to hear you talk so.” If the declamation of the gentleman was pathetic, the silence of the lady was no less so; for it proceeded from a flood of tears.

After a few forced compliments to this trait of feeling, Edward resumed the discourse on the subject of the claims of duty, which were, he said, often incompatible with those of the heart. In the conclusion he seemed a little softened

on

on the harsh subject of eternal separation: but then lady Madelina must come forward, unsay her former cruel aspersions, and with her own hand lead her niece to the altar.

Reveal then, ye immortal Muses! who inspire great designs, what means achieved the glorious task of subjugating lady Madelina's narrow suspicions, and restoring to her mind the beautiful simplicity of nature. Neither the resplendent character nor the exalted birth of a Fitzosborne could have gained the arduous victory, if powers supernal had not intervened. First, Venus, queen of gentle devices! taught her prototype, lady Arabella, the use of feigned sighs, artificial tears, and studied faintings: while Esculapius descended from Olympus, and, assuming the form of a smart physician, stepped out of an elegant chariot, and on viewing the patient,

after three sagacious nods, whispered to the trembling aunt, that the young lady's disorder, being purely mental, was beyond the power of the healing art. Reduced to the dire alternative of resigning the fair sufferer to a husband or to the grave, the relenting lady Madelina did not long hesitate. The resentment of injured honour was appeased by expressions which more nearly resembled concessions than any that her ladyship had ever uttered; and Arabella soon appeared again in public with very little diminution of her charms, notwithstanding her late alarming illness.

It must now be observed, that Mr. Fitzosborne was entirely passive through the whole of this affair. Young ladies are apt to mistake general politeness for significant attentions, and gentlemen are not blamable for the tinder-like susceptibility of their hearts. As soon as
 lady

lady Arabella's preference was visible, he became more reserved in his conduct, as all his friends could witness. Nay, he had even gone so far as to recall to her mind those principles of action, which he gloried in avowing to be the acknowledged energies of his soul. Her unhappy predilection silenced his observations. What then! could he be blamed, or ought he to have suppressed that flow of liberal benevolence which a full heart prompted him to pour forth, and which undoubtedly captivated the amiable fair one? Recollecting the motives which an illiberal world might assign to his behaviour, he believed he ought to have done so, but it was now too late. The public knew the rest. He trusted that the lady had sufficiently consulted her own happiness to study the peculiarities of his character. It was above disguise and abhorrent of restriction.

striction. If she had been mistaken, he deplored the consequences. But as the strong characteristics of nature were engraven on his mind with indelible force, he could not be expected to change.

The classical embellishments of the heroic ages gave infinite advantages to descriptive narrations, to which the cold copyist of modern manners can never aspire. How animating is the personification of winged loves, and choral graces, white-armed nymphs strewing flowers, and sportive fawns chanting an epithalamium, Juno on her radiant car, and Hymen in his saffron mantle! What can the brightest imagination do with such uncouth figures as lawyers in tie-wigs, with their green bags and parchments, or even a little painted French milliner with her band-box? The British like the Grecian
bride

bride offers sacrifices, but not to the deities of Complacence and nuptial Harmony—Her devoirs are too frequently directed to the shrines of Fashion and Vanity; and the merits of the villa, the town-house, the jewels and the nuptial paraphernalia are discussed with all imaginable scrupulosity, while the lover's character is overlooked. He on the other hand is too busy in balancing the chances of the lady's fortune against her father's demand of settlement, and the possibility of *privately* clearing off his most pressing incumbrances, to consider his destined wife in any other light than as a necessary appendage, which entitles him to take possession.

Every scheme preparatory to lady Arabella's intended nuptials was conducted with the greatest decorum. Lady Madelina herself undertook the business
of

of directing the settlements; and Mr. Fitzosborne, contenting himself with the power of putting a negative upon her determinations should the terms be unreasonable, showed little of the alacrity and rapture which a destined bridegroom is expected to assume. Various delays arose to retard the concluding ceremony; and the good-natured world began to doubt, whether the gentleman was most unwilling to part with his liberty, or lady Madelina with her fortune.

Lady Arabella enjoyed, in its fullest extent, the consequence which her present situation gave her. Some mornings she went a shopping to cheap warehouses; at others she was waited upon by different tradesmen at home: she ordered and counter-ordered; bought and returned; thought this monstrous pretty, and that monstrous frightful; gave as much trouble as her rank would possibly

possibly enable her to impose, and then complained of the impertinence and imposition of trades-people.

During one of the delays, which, as I have already observed, retarded the lighting of the Hymeneal torch, lady Arabella recollected, that her conquest over science, philosophy, and genius, was infinitely more arduous than Geraldine's easy fascination of such a thoughtless random youth as her brother. It next occurred to her, that she should prodigiously like to mortify her sister's pretended superiority in sense and talents, by exhibiting a Fitzosborne in her chains. The thought of an excursion to Scotland as soon as she was married, must be attended with many inconveniencies; and, what was still more repugnant to her feelings, with the renunciation of much eclat and splendor. Beside, it was most desirable that the
exhi-

exhibition should be made while she was invested with full plenitude of power. An express was, therefore, dispatched to Scotland to request, that a brother's hand would consign her's to a husband every way worthy of his alliance. The letter concluded with an acknowledgment of tender trepidations, which nothing but the presence of her Geraldine could allay. Lady Madelina's increasing infirmities rendered her unfit to be the depository of her sorrows; and her dear lady Fitzosborne, her only friend, was infinitely too much in the interests of her happy brother, as she styled him, to treat her apprehensive heart with sufficient delicacy.

The Monteiths readily complied with a summons which indicated a perfect renewal of domestic harmony. Though the yellow tint of early autumn had just diffused a more picturesque

turesque appearance over the romantic banks of Loch Lomond, and announced the joyous season of the "hound and horn," a dangerous fall from his horse had given the earl a transient disgust to field sports: and though the blooming countess was by no means weary of her rural enjoyments and occupations, she was too young, and too lovely, to reject an invitation to partake of the elegant varieties which London afforded. She intended to act in this, as she had done at her preceding visits; to taste the Circean cup with moderation, and then to retire with dignity from the fascinating banquet. But there are periods, when, if left to its own stability, the firmest foot would fail; and the best regulated mind, deprived of superior guidance, may often deplore its own depravity.

CHAP. XXIV.

—— He reads much,
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY ARABELLA prepared her lover for the arrival of the expected strangers. "I would not say so to other people," said she, "because one ought to show respect to one's relations. But to be sure the Monteiths are the very oddest creatures in the world. My brother is well enough for one of your fox-hunters, as they call them; but the lady, O! she is so fine and so sensible, and so cautious, and so—I don't know how—vastly disagreeable; I assure you, you will be highly diverted with her: pray observe her, and tell me all you think of her; for I shall not take any thing ill that you say."

"say. She is prodigiously wise, you
 "must know. I hate wise people, at
 "least such wise people as she is. Play
 "her off; I shall be vastly entertained."

Developing characters was Mr. Fitz-
 osborne's favourite amusement; and it
 was one of his topics of complaint, that
 he had never since his return to England
 met with any person that was worth stu-
 dying. But after he had seen the Mon-
 teiths, he did not repeat that opinion.
 The interesting beauty of the countess,
 her apparent happiness, and visible in-
 fluence over her lord's affections, which
 even his careless manners could not dis-
 guise, excited in the philosophic mind
 of Fitzosborne nearly the same emotions
 as those which the arch Apostate felt on
 viewing Adam and Eve in Paradise:
 and, like him,

— "A side he turn'd
 "For envy; yet with jealous leer malign
 "Ey'd them askance."

In

In one particular the resemblance was certainly incomplete. The superior intelligence of the fallen angel knew, that the happiness which he intended to destroy was real. Habitually sceptical, Fitzosborne doubted. He watched the varying turns of Geraldine's animated countenance, analyzed her manner and her expressions with the hope of discovering something to convince him that she was only a polished dissembler. For it was utterly repugnant to all his received ideas, that affection could really subsist between persons of discordant habits, or that principle could supply the place of attachment, and give equal uniformity to the conduct.

The joyous occasion which had summoned him to town gave lord Monteith a prodigious flow of spirits; and he certainly always appeared to least advantage when most inclined to take the lead

lead in conversation. When he was disposed to talk, he never considered how far the indulgence of his own humour was agreeable to the company. His discourse could only be interesting to himself and lady Madelina; for it related to his own castle; how much he and Geraldine had improved it; how popular they were among their neighbours; and how they spent their time. He said many ridiculous things, and uttered many expressions indicative of good nature and benevolence; yet, though he certainly did not intend it, retirement had transformed the gallant Monteith; and his wife and his little girls were still the heroines of his tale. Meantime the countess appeared to be engaged by lady Arabella's frivolity. Her eye indeed frequently reverted to her lord. But whether her attention proceeded

from anxiety or affection even Fitzosborne could not discover.

His lordship at length grew tired; his sister had exhausted her hyperbolic rapture at this happy interview; and the conversation changing to places of public amusement allowed some opening to the countess. The opera was mentioned. Lady Arabella declared, that the new grand ballet was so charming, that it absolutely threw her into hysterics. "I protest," continued she, "I don't think I shall dare to go again, for it makes me downright nervous the next day."

"I congratulate you," said lady Monteth, "on the acquisition of a new pleasure. You had used to profess yourself an enemy to music."

"O! I hate it still in a room, or where there is but one performer.

"But

“ But the opera is so different. There
 “ the lights, and the company, and the
 “ scenes, and the dresses, do so increase
 “ the effect ! And the dances are so fine,
 “ and every body is so overcome, and
 “ one feels so fascinated ! ”

“ The music I have been lately ac-
 “ customed to,” resumed Geraldine,
 “ is in a very different style. An old
 “ Highlander playing upon his bagpipe,
 “ and the voices of two or three Scotch
 “ girls chaunting one of their simple
 “ ditties, which reverberates among our
 “ rocks, convey to me a more perfect
 “ idea of the powers of melody, than the
 “ scenes you describe. And though I
 “ hope frequently to visit the opera
 “ while in London, I much doubt whe-
 “ ther my sensibility can be so strongly
 “ affected there as it has frequently been
 “ during my evening rambles about
 “ James-town.”

"I hope, madam," said lady Madelina, "that your ladyship never *walks* beyond the limits of your own park."

"James-town is but a little way from the castle," replied the countess, not immediately entering into the force of this observation; "I go there most days, and the walk is much pleasanter than the drive."

"It is very right, niece," observed lady Madelina, in a tone of stricter authority, "that you should assist your dependants; but you should do it like a gentlewoman; and too frequent intercourse breeds familiarity and contempt."

"I have fortunately not found familiarity and contempt synonymous," resumed lady Monteith, who, though generally silently acquiescent, seemed on the present occasion disposed to defend her own conduct. "I appear to my colony

" colony in one uniform character ; and
 " however frequent my visits, or in
 " whatever style I make them, a friend
 " is not unwelcome, and a benefactress
 " need not fear contempt. Continual
 " intercourse creates a mutual interest.
 " I thoroughly enter into their characters.
 " Beside, I acquire much knowledge in
 " various particulars, which those who
 " are not personally acquainted with
 " humble life can never accurately pos-
 " sess."

" And of what use is that knowledge?"
 inquired lady Madelina.

" It may be applied to various pur-
 " poses. It teaches me the value of
 " time. Because while we are studying
 " amusements to get rid of what we feel
 " to be an incumbrance, the poverty of
 " the labourer makes him conscious of
 " its importance. He knows that he
 " cannot waste an hour without finding
 " his.

“his daily food abridged. And when
“I see the œconomical contrivances
“which necessity teaches, the humble
“comforts which stand instead of lux-
“uries, and the cheerful patience with
“which real inconveniencies are borne
“by those who know no happier lot, I
“cannot (at least immediately) become
“fastidious and extravagant.”

“The unfortunate sensibility of my
“temper,” said lady Arabella, “would
“never permit me to frequent such
“places. You certainly must have very
“strong nerves, sister. I protest, when
“I have seen several little dirty, starved,
“naked children, peeping out of those
“smoky hovels which stand by the road
“side, I have often thought that it
“would be great mercy to shoot them,
“as one does worn-out horses.”

“To shoot them!” exclaimed most
of the company. ,

“Yes!”

“ Yes!” resumed lady Arabella; “ for
 “ only think what a miserable life theirs
 “ must be.”

“ Did you never see any of these poor
 “ little creatures merry?” inquired the
 countess.

“ O yes! the little savages grinned
 “ sometimes, and jumped about like
 “ monkies; and with just as much
 “ sense; for if they thought at all, they
 “ must be miserable.”

Geraldine recollected the sentiment,
 that “ where ignorance is bliss,” it is
 both cruel and foolish to impart a know-
 ledge which discovers wretchedness. But
 while she was considering how best to
 point out those comforts which opulence
 and intelligence might impart to the
 poor, without creating desires unsuitable
 to their stations, her reflections were
 interrupted by an harangue from Fitz-
 osborne.

“ Nature, madam,” said he, addressing himself to lady Arabella, “ is not
“ a niggard ; though the imbecility of
“ political institutions and the corrupt
“ state of society frequently confine her
“ beneficent views. These infant savages
“ enjoy blessings to which perhaps their
“ oppressors are strangers. Health,
“ natural liberty, exemption from care,
“ and a happy ignorance of all the re-
“ straints which custom imposes, and all
“ the false indulgencies which affluence
“ requires. Their manners are unde-
“ praved, their inclinations unsophisti-
“ cated. I should think these obscure
“ cots the chosen abodes of innocence
“ and virtue.”

“ That is rather too liberal a con-
“ jecture,” returned lady Monteith,
beaming upon the supposed champion
of the equal dealings of Providence a
complacent smile. “ My long residence
“ in

" in retirement allows me positively to
 " contradict the popular notion, that
 " the country is the seat of Arcadian
 " happiness and purity, though much
 " may be done to ameliorate the con-
 " dition of the lower classes of society ;
 " and I am convinced, that residing
 " among them is one of the most pro-
 " bable means of effecting that import-
 " ant design."

" I perfectly agree with your lady-
 " ship's sentiments, particularly when
 " the poor, like the fortunate vassals of
 " Monteith, may contemplate exalted
 " rank without fear of imbibing exotic
 " vices." The countess blushed, and
 bowed at this compliment, without re-
 collecting, that it might be intended for
 her lord. Fitzosborne watched the sud-
 den emotion. " Can vanity," said he
 to himself, " be the ruling foible ? If

“it be, the smothered flame shall
“blaze.”

Lord Monteith now took part in the conversation. “I hope, Sir, you mean
“to put your own principles in practice,
“and that we shall be very good friends
“when you come to reside at Kinloch
“Castle. It is within eighty miles of
“us, and we may frequently join in
“parties upon the lakes and the moors.
“I was there once. I thought it a hor-
“rid place with its canopied state beds,
“and worm-eaten tapestry; but you
“will give it a more agreeable air when
“you live there.”

“Live there!” shrieked lady Arabella. “What! live at Kinloch Castle?
“What a barbarous idea!”

“O you are thinking of times of old,
“poor Bella. Yes! they were barba-
“rous, I’ll grant. But it will be very
“different

“ different when you shall be living
 “ there with a good husband, from what
 “ it was when you wanted to set off from
 “ it in search of one. Poor Bella! I
 “ remember your peeping through the
 “ painted glass between the huge stone
 “ window-frames, and wondering, whe-
 “ ther the object that looked black
 “ at a great distance was a cow or a
 “ gentleman. Poor Bella! If you are
 “ any thing of a knight-errant, Fitzof-
 “ borne, you would have liked to have
 “ seen her shut up in that castle, like an
 “ enchanted lady, waiting for some gal-
 “ lant Longsword to set her at liberty.
 “ But I suppose Longsword was be-
 “ nighted, or set upon by Saracens, for
 “ he never found his way to the castle—
 “ Did he, Bella?”

My lord had now recovered the con-
 versation; and no common effort could
 get it out of his hands, till lady Arabella

very gravely told him, that his raillery was misplaced. His lordship then, starting up, gave his sister a good-humoured kiss, declared that he did not mean to displease her, promised to say no more about the castle that nobody could get out of, or the knight that never could get in; and whispering her, that he then thought her the prettiest prisoner he ever saw in his life, he summoned the countess and hurried her back to Portland-place.

Lady Arabella scarcely waited till they were out of sight, to ask if they were not strange creatures.

"The countess," said Fitzosborne, "is most amazingly beautiful."

"She must be very much improved
 "then," returned lady Arabella; "for
 "it used to be doubted where she was
 "even pretty. But I believe gentlemen
 "who have lived much abroad have a
 "*singular* taste in beauty."

“ There are some forms,” said Fitzosborne, bowing with a significant air, “ which would be esteemed lovely in every region. Lady Monteith’s chief beauty is the sparkling intelligence of her countenance; for certainly her features are not regular.”

“ No,” rejoined her ladyship a little appeased, “ her features are not regular; and some people will call that intelligence in her countenance conceit.”

“ Is she counted vain?”

“ Insufferably so. It is her ruling foible. Every body who is acquainted with her knows it. I wonder you did not discover it.”

Fitzosborne promised to consider her character with deeper attention at the next opportunity. “ If vanity,” said he to himself, “ be indeed her predominant fault, it is impossible that her apparent happiness can be sincere. The vanity
“ of

“ of a superior mind is not gratified by
 “ common incense ; and Monteith seems
 “ too thoughtless to discern her peculiar
 “ excellencies, and too self-engrossed to
 “ give them their appropriate praise. I
 “ suspect that his personal advantages
 “ attracted her inexperience, and that
 “ her judgment now secretly reprobates
 “ the premature choice.”

Lord Monteith’s opinion of the intended disposal of his sister was, that it was a very well-schemed thing. “ She
 “ was just a fit match,” said he, “ for a
 “ younger brother. Fitzosborne seems
 “ to have a great deal of sense, and we
 “ all know that Arabella is not one of
 “ king Solomon’s family. She will,
 “ perhaps, prove a little refractory at
 “ first ; but he will conduct himself
 “ cleverly, and soon convince her that
 “ the husband is the superior character.
 “ You think so, Geraldine, don’t you ?”

“ O, un-

“ O, undoubtedly !” But, with whatever certainty the countess could speak of her own situation, she felt extremely doubtful as to the happy issue of lady Arabella’s prospects. In spite of the reserve of her lover’s character, their dissimilarity was evident. She was trifling, superficial, selfish, and unguarded : with respect to Fitzosborne, [whenever the thick veil with which he chose to obscure himself admitted a casual discovery, superior intelligence and liberality of sentiment were apparent. “ I know,” said Geraldine to herself, “ that Arabella’s temper is impetuous, “ her prejudices are rooted, and her “ views of connubial happiness are too “ superficial to make her even wish to “ assimilate her taste to that of her husband’s, or to assign any merit to complacent acquiescence. His enlarged “ understanding must discover her foolish

“ ish

"ish pertinacity ; and the generous feel-
 "ing that always accompanies a liberal
 "mind will be perpetually wounded by
 "the contracted ideas of a selfish heart.
 "Her ridiculous opinion of the constant
 "incense which beauty demands pre-
 "cludes all hope of her improvement.
 "She will be continually requiring a
 "flatterer, and he a companion. I am
 "certain, that even now he strongly
 "feels the disproportion of their minds.
 "What harsh expressions did he utter
 "against the oppressors of the poor.
 "They were, doubtless, pointed at her
 "extravagant notions, which seemed to
 "degrade them from the rank of ra-
 "tional creatures. Indeed, though his
 "mercenary design somewhat debases
 "his character, I pity Mr. Fitzosborne.
 "He appears to be well worthy of a
 "happier fate."

The

The chain of her reflections was here broken by his lordship's observing, that she was as dull and as bad company as his future brother-in-law.

CHAP. XXV.

Calm thinking villains, whom no faith can fix,
Of crooked councils and dark politics.

POPE.

FITZOSBORNE called to return the honour of lord Monteith's visit just at the time when his lordship was gone out on some important business. This engagement had been discussed the preceding evening, but philosophers are very apt to be absent. He inquired if the countess was at home, and on sending in his name he was admitted. There could be no impropriety in receiving a visit from a gentleman who was soon to become a relation; and Geraldine had been sufficiently interested by his appearance to be anxious to know if the estimate that she had formed of his character was just.

Previous

Previous to his arrival, she had been amusing herself with a harp which had lain silent for some years. It had been new strung by an eminent hand, and was become capable of producing the most ravishing harmony. Fitzosborne was an idolator of music. The skill of the countess was too well known to admit of disqualifying speeches. She readily complied with his request to exhibit the powers of her instrument, and after a graceful prelude accompanied it with her voice in the following sonnet :

SONNET TO MAY:

Come May, the empire of the earth assume,
 Be crown'd with flowers as universal queen ;
 Take from fresh budded groves their tender
 green,
 Bespangled with Pomona's richest bloom,
 And form thy vesture. Let the sun illumine
 The dew-drops glittering in the blue serene,
 And let them hang, like orient pearls, between
 Thy locks besprent with Flora's best perfume.

Attend

Attend your sovereign's steps, ye balmy gales !
 O'er her ambrosial floods of fragrance pour ;
 Let livelier verdure animate the vales,
 And brighter hues embellish every flower ;
 And hark, the concert of the woodland hails,
 All gracious May! thy presence, and thy power.

She enforced the last line with the whole compass of her melodious voice. The apartment reverberated with the magic sounds. She paused. Fitzosborne seemed lost in speechless ecstasy. He raised his eyes, suffused with tears, and they met those of the countess.—He retired to the window to recover from his emotion, while she formed the ineffectual wish, that Arabella had possessed a mind capable of estimating and rewarding such refined sensibility.

It was some moments before Fitzosborne was able to renew the conversation. At length he hesitatingly articulated, " You devote many hours every day to this charming science ?"

" No,

"No, indeed! I very seldom play,
"unless to perfect myself in a new tune,
"or to amuse lord Monteith."

"Is lord Monteith fond of music?"

"Passionately so."

"I did not suspect it. Of what
kind?"

"Every kind: from the loftiest
"compositions of Handel to the sim-
"plest strains of rustic harmony. But
"I presume, sir, your taste is more dis-
"criminating; and being formed upon
"the refined Italian model, it requires
"artful combination and striking con-
"trast."

"It requires, madam, such an exalted
"gratification as it has just enjoyed."
He then rose, as if intending to take
leave, when a miniature of Lucy Evans,
which hung over the chimney glass, ap-
peared first to attract his eye; and he
exclaimed,

exclaimed, "You paint, I know; do
"you take likenesses?"

"Very bad ones," said the countess,
handing to him the picture. "And
"when you view that juvenile perform-
"ance with attention, you will say so.
"But it is highly valuable to me, since
"it gives me a faint resemblance of a
"very estimable friend."

"I knew," said Fitzosborne, fixing
his eyes upon her with a most penetrat-
ing glance, "that your soul was really
"formed for friendship. I am a phy-
"siognomist, madam."

"I do not suspect you of magical
"skill," replied Geraldine laughing,
"for I am very much inclined to con-
"trovert your opinion. I never had
"but one intimate friendship; and I
"meet with my Lucy too seldom, and
"our epistolary communications are too
"limited, to admit of our attachment
"im-

“imprinting any strong lines upon my
“countenance; even allowing what I
“am not inclined to admit, that mental
“habits impress indelible marks upon
“the muscular organs.”

“I must enter upon a defence of my
“art, madam; and if I am betrayed
“into any improprieties, remember
“yourself only can be to blame. You
“have long been attached to this lady,
“and she is sensible, animated, and pe-
“netrating.”

“If you go on with such fortunate
“guesses, I shall begin to retract, and
“believe you possessed of the power of
“divination.”

“I only wish to convince you, that
“a constant perseverance in one train
“of thought must give a correct habit
“to the mind, and diffuse a serene
“dignity over the countenance. And
“certainly the collision of two ingenuous
“minds

“ minds will brighten the qualities of
 “ each. The soul ever seeks its coun-
 “ terpart, and tries to assimilate itself to
 “ what it admires. Your correspondence
 “ with a person such as you allow this
 “ lady to be, accounts for the sparkling
 “ intelligence of your manner, and all
 “ the lively emanations of your fascinat-
 “ ing wit.”

The countess replied with a blushing
 smile, “ I believe you are labouring
 “ under a little illusion. You certainly
 “ mistake me for lady Arabella ; or are
 “ you so accustomed to compliment,
 “ that you involuntarily adopt that strain
 “ to every body ?”

“ You may mistake my character,
 “ madam,” said Fitzosborne ; “ but it
 “ is impossible that I can suppose you
 “ are lady Arabella.” A deep sigh
 escaped at those words. He hesitated,
 and then proceeded : “ I can, however,
 “ entreat

"entreat your pardon with a better
 "grace, as I did not seek an opportu-
 "nity of expressing the sentiments
 "which I strongly feel. If there be
 "any indecorum in admiring you and
 "requesting your friendship, recollect,
 "madam, I share that guilt with the
 "original of this charming portrait."

The countess immediately replied:
 "Every branch of lord Monteith's
 "family has indubitable claims on my
 "attention. Give me leave to assure
 "you, that his lordship regards you
 "with the sincerest esteem, and that he
 "is impatient for an event to take place
 "which will cement his friendship by
 "the bond of alliance."

"If it be in my power to make lady
 "Arabella happy——," said Fitzosborne,
 fixing his eyes upon the ground, and
 seeming to plunge into a gloomy chaos
 of doubt; "but I will hope for the best.

"We know, that 'whatever is right.'
 "As the world is now constituted, events
 "are not in our own hands." He then
 rose, and took leave with a more pro-
 found sigh than any he had before ut-
 tered. "Poor man!" ejaculated lady
 Monteith, "his feelings are too acute
 "for happiness. He will become a
 "prey to the most morbid melancholy,
 "and his inattentive wife will consider
 "his dejection as a sufficient excuse for
 "her dissipation. I see he is forced
 "into this fatal connexion by his friends.
 "Why does he not exert the natural in-
 "dependence of his energetic character,
 "and condemn the mercenary bond?
 "How happy would he be with such a
 "partner as my Lucy!"

Could lady Monteith have penetrated
 the dark disguises of premeditating
 villany, how different would have been
 the conclusion of her mental soliloquy!

She would as soon have pointed out an alliance between the meek dignified Octavia, and the insidious, cruel, impenetrable Tiberius. And now let me for a few moments exercise that digressive privilege which I have claimed for moral purposes.

I would ask the accurate judges of mankind, what striking traits of superior eminence are yet visible in Fitzosborne's conduct? what generous sentiment falling spontaneously from the tongue? what artless discovery of the genuine emotions of an upright worthy heart? Are they charmed with the morals of a man, whose ambiguous expressions can only be interpreted by supposing that he secretly despises the woman whom he avowedly pursues? Contempt for such mercenary treachery must be the natural sentiment in unsophisticated minds; and contempt must rise into abhorrence in

H 2

every

every breast that is uncorrupted by the laxity of modern principles, if they suppose that his ardent commendations of a *married* lady were intended to convey to her heart the audacious idea, that they proceeded from the warm emotions of preference.

The mind of Geraldine was unsophisticated and incorrupt. She saw his reluctance to his intended marriage, and interpreted his praises as he designed she should. Yet neither contempt nor abhorrence arose in her breast. On the contrary, though steadily determined to prevent any insinuation to lady Arabella's disadvantage, and to repress every expression inconsistent with the pure dignity of a matron, she felt for the wiley Fitzosborne a mixture of pity and esteem.

—— O Flattery !

How soon thy soft insinuating oil
Supples the toughest souls !

What

What better method can I adopt to convince the younger part of my readers of the necessity of shutting their ears to the syren song, than placing the example of lady Monteith full in their view? Adorned with every natural and acquired accomplishment; "chaste as the isle on Dian's temple;" attached to her husband; the fondest of mothers; domestic, prudent, and religious. What profanation even to *suppose* such consummate excellence open to an illicit attack! Yet Fitzosborne, deeply versed in the science of human frailty, no sooner perceived that her vanity listened to his blandishments, than he not only determined to *assail* her principles, but felt a firm conviction that his enterprize would *succeed*.

Her delicacy required, and his duplicity meditated, a covert assault. He perceived on recollection, that he had

been too unguarded in the preceding conversation, and he resolved to follow the path which she had pointed out, by affecting great respect for lady Arabella, and cultivating the friendship of lord Monteith. He despised his lordship's abilities too much to fear that his observation would be any impediment to his views; and his own assumption of the title of a husband would only give an unprincipled seducer more unsuspected opportunities of forwarding his insidious designs.

His visits were now generally made when he knew that lord Monteith was at home; and if his lordship was abroad, he only left a card for the countess. His behaviour to her, when they met in company, was pointedly respectful and reserved. But care was always taken to show that such reserve was the effect of painful effort. By studiously avoiding
every

every opportunity of engaging her in conversation, and by a marked neglect of those offices of general civility which the laws of politeness prescribed, he appeared fearful of trusting to the susceptibility of his own heart. He seemed only anxious to guard his mind from the intrusion of every image inconsistent with his fidelity to lady Arabella. His eyes were fixed upon her, as if he hoped to discover something worthy of his attention. Sometimes, indeed, they wandered to lady Monteith; but if she observed him, they were instantly withdrawn, with an expression of regret for the involuntary dereliction.

His aim was to exhibit a superior mind, inflexible in principle, but tenderly susceptible, maintaining a severe struggle, and determined to be victorious. Lady Monteith was so far the dupe of his artifices, as to view his conduct

in the light that he desired. But she also drew from it a consequence which he did not intend. She fancied his apparent efforts were successful, and she now only regretted, that Arabella wanted both the inclination and the capacity to improve her delicate situation to her own advantage.

It has been observed, that the seducer several times conquers his unwarrantable desires in the course of his guilty pursuit. Compelled to adopt disguises, to consult opportunities, to avoid premature discoveries, the pain of repeated restrictions, imposed for the purposes of vice, is greater than would attend the virtuous resolution of abandoning the insidious project. This observation was eminently just in the instance of Fitzosborne. His soul was not whirled along by the tempest of passion. Beauty did not excite violent emotion. Sense
and

and sweetness carried with them no irresistible charm. His frigid heart was too cold and selfish to prompt his diabolical invention, or to extenuate his crimes. His vices were systematic, the result of design, guided by method, sanctioned by sophistry, and originating from the covert war which he waged, not merely against the chastity, but also against the principles of his victims: not solely against their reputation, their peace of mind, and their temporal prospects, but against their notions of rectitude and religion, against those immortal hopes which sustain the afflicted and sooth the corroding pangs of repentant guilt.

To lady Arabella, unconscious of his designs, Fitzosborne's increased attentions gave a livelier pleasure, from the idea that he intended by that means to

convey a marked contempt of the countess. Her elation would have been more complete, if he would have cordially joined in those remarks on the person and behaviour of Geraldine which supplied lady Madelina's domestic party with an agreeable topic for conversation. She recollected, however, with satisfaction, that if he did not *join* in these censures, he did not contradict them, and the extenuating apologies which he sometimes urged might rather be termed an attempt to "damn with saint praise," than a friendly defence. She was confirmed in her opinion, that her admirer secretly despised lady Monteith's pretensions to mental superiority, by observing, that her *bons mots* and remarks passed equally unregarded, while her own were sure of having in him one attentive listener. Lady Arabella's views
of

of life were neither very accurate nor extensive. Yet she had some suspicion that the connubial bond operated as a powerful soporific upon the deference, observance, and tenderness, which lovers sometimes, even in this refined age, think proper to assume. Her dear viscountess had assured her, that if Edward's behaviour as a husband equalled his attentions as an admirer, they would certainly be pointed at as an *exemplary* couple; for that at present all the world knew him by the title of lady Arabella Macdonald's slave. No one more strongly felt those passions which Pope affirms to be the predominate features in the mind of women, "the love of pleasure" and "the love of sway," than her ladyship. But since it was at least doubtful, whether she could continue to be "queen for life," she was desirous to protract the period which acknow-

H 6

ledged

ledged her right of government; and, as the gentleman was not very urgent for an early day, the lady's sensibility was not hurt by repeated denials.

Another unexpected cause of delay at this time intervened. Lady Madelina had often declared, that as soon as she had settled her dear niece to her satisfaction, she should have entirely done with a world of which she repeatedly assured her friends she was quite weary. Twenty years before, on her first marriage with her ever-lamented sir Simon Frazer, she had used similar expressions. She then said that she only lived for his sake; and if she were so unfortunate as to lose him, her "occupation would be gone," and existence would become an insupportable burden. But as that deprecated event did happen without any lasting change in her ladyship's apparent relish for the good things of this life, it

was

was suspected, that twenty years hence her affectionate heart might find some pretext for that strong attachment to her person, which her excessive attention to her own health and safety rendered visible to all who knew her. When the reader, therefore, considers the infinite succession of last plans, and final engagements, which she would probably have pleaded, his sensibility will be less hurt to find, that death dealt by her, as he did by "the fair lady in costly robes," mentioned in the good old song, by compelling her to trust future events to that Providence whose superintendence had not been her favourite speculation.

I have observed, that the settlements were drawn up under lady Madelina's eye, who seemed desirous of extending the supremacy which she had uniformly exercised over every person with whom she was connected (except her niece)
beyond

beyond the grave. She had multiplied entails, and considered every possible event of contention, separation, divorce, and second marriage. She had explored the family pedigree, picked out the most sonorous hereditary christian names, and stringing three or four together, which were capable of liquid pronunciation, she ordered, that they should be adopted by the successive sons and daughters of this intended marriage, on pain of forfeiting all right to inheritance. Jointure, pin-money, and alimony took up several pages, and the finished deed had more the appearance of a truce between two inveterate enemies than a recognition of mutual confidence and esteem. The very sight of these formidable parchments must have annihilated the whole court of Cytherea; but fortunately the modern Hymen never brings his causes before that tribunal, which

which is now exclusively employed in trying affairs of libertinism, or, as it is politely termed, gallantry.

Lady Madelina perused the stupendous performance with delight; weighed the technical meaning of every word which the useful tautology of the law had introduced; and, trusting that the united names of Fitzosborne, Frazer, and Macdonald might found in courts and castles a thousand years hence, declared that she was *perfectly satisfied*. It is supposed, that the pronunciation of those words, which she had never before been known to use, occasioned a mortal revulsion in her oracular organs, for she was found speechless next morning. Lady Arabella's determined resolution of enjoying the pleasures of a public breakfast prevented her from attending to the assurances of her aunt's woman, that such a change must be inevitably followed

followed by mortal consequences. She contented herself with leaving positive orders to be immediately sent for if lady Madelina grew worse, and drove off with lady Fitzosborne, who convinced her that she was perfectly right; for, as the patient could not speak, company could do her no service. The office of smoothing the bed of death devolved on Geraldine, who hastened to the house of mourning at the first intimation of what had happened, and arrived a few moments before lady Madelina expired.

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CHAP. XXVI.

Let then the fair one beautifully cry,
In Magdalene's loose hair and lifted eye.

POPE.

THE melancholy event related in my last Chapter was speedily conveyed to the gay groupe whom the elegant *dejeuné* of the duchess of A. had assembled on the flowery banks of Thames. It was announced to lady Arabella with very little preparation; for as, in compliance with the wishes of the company, though declaredly out of spirits, she had just consented to exhibit her own fine person and her lover's to the best advantage by standing up in a reel, no one supposed but that she might hear the sad tale with decent composure. It was, however, quite the

the reverse, and her sensibility now became as remarkable, as her fortitude had been before. She fainted, fell into hysterics, wept, recovered, and was at last conveyed apparently lifeless to her carriage. Every creature present partook in her concern for lady Madelina's death, for it certainly spoiled a most delightful party. Though the company endeavoured to recover their spirits after the fair mourner was removed, all attempts at brilliancy was prevented by the unavoidable intrusion of serious ideas. The ladies grew as stupid as if they were at church. Death's heads and physicians intruded into every subject; and the last topic of conversation that was started by the gentlemen was a discussion of the merits of the patent coffin.

Lady Arabella was accompanied home by the Fitzosbornes. The viscountess engaged in the friendly talk
of

of consolation, while Edward, leaning back with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon the lovely sufferer, (I suppose) more deeply sympathized in her sorrow; for the harangues of the comforter were only interrupted by lady Arabella's sobs and sighs, which did not abate in violence, though lady Fitzosborne was diffuse on the folly of grieving for what was sure to happen, and therefore what nobody could prevent. The carriage at length stopped. Lady Arabella was supported up stairs, swallowed more hartshorn, and at length became sufficiently composed to make inquiries after the particulars of an event of which she had only yet received a general account.

Lady Madelina's first gentlewoman, a Macdonald by an indirect descent, entered on the sad recital. Nothing could be more capable of being compressed

pressed into a small compass; but Mrs. Margaret was eminently gifted with that species of oratory which may be termed expansion. Her poor dear lady's merits, her poor dear lady's sufferings, the confidence her poor dear lady placed in her faithful services, and a firm conviction, that she never should survive her poor dear lady: these topics were expatiated upon, till Arabella became a little displeased that any one should take up grief just at the instant herself had laid it down. It came out in the course of the narration, that from some peculiar circumstances lady Monteith had adopted an opinion, that the spark of life was not actually extinguished; but that the speedy exertion of proper means might revive the suspended animation. To this opinion the physicians, who had been summoned, lent some countenance; and the humanity of the

countess

countess prompted her not only to command these applications, but by her presence to prevent the proceedings which are sometimes injudiciously adopted at the first moment of apparent dissolution.

Mrs. Margaret was not only convinced of the inefficacy of the attempt, but, conscientiously believing it to be very presumptuous, had refused her services, with some little sense of indignity at having had them required, and keen susceptibility at the supposition that she could bear to stay in the room where her poor dear lady lay. Arabella joined in her opinion; and the discourse changed from the virtues of Mrs. Margaret and the deceased, to the wickedness of disturbing the dead, and the concern which the affectionate niece now felt, that her dear aunt had none of
her

her *own* family to attend her in her last moments.

The failure of lady Monteith's efforts relieved Arabella from what might more properly be called a vexation than a distress; and her softer feelings, freed from disagreeable embarrassments, had leisure to flow in the delicate channels which etiquette prescribes to grief. She mourned for one fortnight in the sweetest manner imaginable, dressed in a close cap with her bouquet stuck on one side, her robe loosely fastened, and her arms hanging negligently. All her visitants agreed, that she looked prettier than ever, and Fitzosborne was continually reminded of those well-known lines which characterize the fair sex, as designed to "be adorned by distress," and "dressed most amiably in tears."

But

But it was not over the unconscious tomb that this fair flowret drooped. The increased sensibility of the present age, grown too fragile to encounter the morbid contagion of death, declines all intimate acquaintance with spectacles of mortality, and deposes hireling hands to perform those offices which the sterner fortitude of former times claimed as the peculiar privilege of affection and kindred. My attachment to obsolete manners inclines me to refer the universal custom of flying from the bed of death and its melancholy appendages, to some other cause than excessive tenderness. I suspect the fastidiousness of indulgence, accustomed to bask in the sunshine of life, and bereft of sufficient energy even to wish to procure a defence against the storm. I discover the enervating habits of dissipation, the cant of flattery, and the sophisms of self-delusion.

lusion. Beauty will not contemplate the fixed rayless eye, lest the recollection should obscure the brilliancy of its own: youth and health refuse to be acquainted with the livid cheek, which preaches the importance of the passing hours; and gaiety abjures all knowledge of the clay-cold reliques of the human form, lest the fearful sentence of "such shalt thou be" should palsy the graceful step, arrest the swift career of levity, and render the whisper of adulation uninteresting.

Lady Arabella's first tears flowed beneath her brother's roof; but her extreme susceptibility soon required a fresh asylum. Lady Monteith was the worst comforter in the world; and she was convinced that her poor spirits would be quite overcome, if she did not get amongst people a little more like other folks. Geraldine indeed had performed the

the office of a consoler to her Lucy with tolerable success; but the retired daughter of a country clergyman, and a fashionable belle, are different characters: and either the simplicity of the countess did not discriminate, or some secret spark of ill-nature prevented her from adopting the proper method of treating her present guest. She permitted lady Arabella's tears to stream without any admonition that they might dim her eyes or injure her complexion; and in the most violent paroxysms of grief she strove to soften her emotions by leading the discourse to her dear aunt's affection for her, and anxious solicitude to promote her happiness. She had once the inhumanity to suggest the idea, that the separated spirit would be afflicted by witnessing the sorrow of surviving friends; and that the violent indulgence of extreme regret might be construed

to proceed from a want of due submission to the Supreme Disposer of events. She had indeed successfully expiated on these topics to Miss Evans. The countenance of that artless girl assumed an angelic composure whilst listening to the solemn sentiments; and her hands and eyes uplifted in meek resignation seemed to say, "I will not impede the beatitude of my mother, nor murmur at the dispensations of my God."

But in the present instance the awful allusion produced very horrid effects. Lady Arabella's ideas of "things unseen" were extremely confused. She had never had time to investigate the subject herself; and, from some arguments which Mr. Fitzosborne had used, she was inclined to hope, that the vague notions which she had picked up in her early years were purely chimerical terrors, the effect of low prejudices. She, therefore,

fore, replied to the consolatory arguments of the countess with a shriek of apprehension; besought her in future to avoid such shocking expressions; and, looking round her, as if in expectation of seeing lady Madelina's ghost, she became so fearful of having a visionary attendant, that she durst not move from one room to another without being accompanied by a corporeal guard.

At Mr. Fitzosborne's next visit she expatiated on the premeditated cruelty of lady Monteith, who chose the very period of her being so low that she could hardly support herself, to afflict her by naming subjects that she never could bear. She was perfectly innocent, she said; had never hurt any body, nor committed any crime in her life; and why need she be talked to about separated spirits, and religion, as if she were the greatest sinner in the world? Lady

Monteith had even hinted, that there would be an indecorum in her going into public immediately after the interment of an aunt, who had to her supplied the tenderness and protection of the maternal character; and she was certain that the funeral was delayed, not so much out of respect, as to keep her immured, and to make her break her heart, which was much too refined and tender to endure those forms of woe to which stronger minds might submit. In fine, she enjoined Fitzosborne to state to lady Monteith the impropriety of her conduct, and to convince her how wrong it was to talk about disagreeable things which she could not be sure were true. Edward undertook the office, but advised lady Arabella not to be too sanguine of success. Prejudices, he said, were stubborn things to contend with, and lady Monteith had unfortunately imbibed several.

several. He complimented lady Arabella on her more enlarged notions, but conjured her to conceal a superiority which might probably excite envy; and in case of any future attempts to inspire her with superstitious terrors, he wished her either to give a sudden turn to the conversation, or to enjoy the triumph of reason over bigotry in a dignified silence.

Fitzosborne entered on the task enjoined, with the cruel avidity of a sanguinary mind, bent on destroying what it was necessitated to revere. His observations on lady Monteith's behaviour enabled him clearly to develop her character; and as he founded his hopes of success on her evident love of praise, he was sensible that the unaffected sincerity of her religious principles would prove a steady bulwark too powerful to be assailed by open attacks, and which he must either undermine or abandon

his pursuit. He perceived, that though her vivacity at times transcended the limits of rigid prudence, even in the wildest flights of gaiety the most guarded ridicule on sacred subjects was unpalatable ; and though the engrossing amusements of polite life afforded less leisure for reflection and devotional exercises during her stay in town, she ever passed a dissipated Sunday with evident regret, and appeared to feel every omission of duty with the self-reproach of conscious error, rather than to avow her neglect with the bold air of one who expects to be applauded for liberality and exemption from prescribed forms. The footing on which he was received in the family gave him frequent occasions of perceiving that, though she did not burst out into frequent censures against licentiousness, she never treated a gross deviation from morality and decorum with that levity
of

of remark which warrants the conclusion, that the observer's principles are too relaxed to view flagitious conduct with proper abhorrence. Though no one knew better how to wing the shaft of raillery, and to encourage "sport that wrinkled care derides," wit was with her the companion of unreprieved pleasure, not the child of unrestrained liberty. Its frolic hand was ever taught to respect the palladium of virtue and religion.

The event which Geraldine had lately witnessed confirmed her habitual reverence for serious subjects. Without professing to feel any marked attachment to lady Madelina, or affecting sorrow for her loss, she had contemplated an object of mortality with the sympathetic thoughtfulness of one who felt conscious that she was a fellow-pilgrim, journeying

to the same bourne. A conviction of the instability of temporal possessions, and the inefficiency of human aid, would naturally direct a considerate mind to firmer supports, and to recur to the idea of a traveller, than which nothing can be more analogous to human life. The certainty of a limited residence amongst the objects of sense excited a strong solicitude to extend her knowledge of things invisible, and to secure an interest in that undiscovered world of which she must one day become an inhabitant.

A state of mind like that which I have described appears at the first glance to be unfavourable to the designs of a Fitz-osborne. He thought it otherwise. It was a disposition which naturally led to the discussion of moral and religious truths. The decent forms which the custom of the world still sanctions prescribed

scribed to the Monteiths the necessity of avoiding promiscuous visitors, and absenting from public amusements. And though the fair Arabella seemed to cast a longing look from her solitude upon forbidden pleasure, the countess listened to the narrative of the day with a more languid attention, and imperceptibly led back the conversation to some improving subject. Her attempts generally frightened lady Arabella, and compelled her to take refuge in her own apartments; where she found occupation in consulting with her maid on the changes of ornament which the alterations in her mourning would admit. Lord Monteith, though at first doubtful how he should kill time during this melancholy period of confinement, found so much amusement in ringing the dumb bell and learning to play on the violin, that he re-

lapsed into his old misfortune of want of leisure; and Fitzosborne would have found it more difficult to avoid than to select opportunities for private conversation with Geraldine.

CHAP. XXVII.

— In discourse more sweet—
 Others apart sat on a hill retir'd,
 In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
 Of Providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
 Fix'd fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute,
 And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.
 Of good and evil much they argued, then,
 Of happiness and final misery,
 Passion and apathy, glory and shame,
 Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy.

MILTON.

READING was one of lady Monteith's constant amusements; and among her favourite writers the moral pages of Johnson held a distinguished pre-eminence. His instructive romance of *Rasselas* occupied her one morning. She stopped at the part which seemed to intimate the author's belief in the possibility of spectral appearances. The idea strongly engrossed her imagination. She

ruminated on the arguments which might be adduced on either side, and continued in a profound reverie when Fitzosborne entered the room.

After a pause, in which lady Monteith was trying to disengage her ideas from the train of reflection which they had pursued, Edward politely expressed his fears that he had interrupted an agreeable study; and, with an intimation that he would immediately withdraw, inquired what subject occupied her attention. She delivered to him the unclosed volume without any comment. He read the passage to which her finger referred, and restored it with an observation, that the British censor was perfectly consistent. Geraldine, mistaking this remark for approbation, replied, that she had ever thought him so, and therefore strove to form her mind by the exalted standard his works prescribed.

“ I agree

"I agree with you," said Fitzosborne.
 "His writings do indeed prescribe an
 "exalted standard of morality. A gi-
 "gantic one, I should rather say, utterly
 "inadequate to the present state of the
 "world. His views and writings are,
 "however, all uniform. An enemy to
 "levity and simplicity, a lover of disci-
 "pline and system, averse to those rights
 "which man inherently possesses, tena-
 "cious of those bulwarks which society
 "forms, he is repulsive in his politics,
 "uncomplying in his morality, and
 "austere in his religion."

It was only the last observation which
 convinced the countess that this exor-
 dium was designed to censure her fa-
 vourite author, and she began his de-
 fence by making some preliminary con-
 cessions. In extenuation of that air of
 discontent and depression which ever
 pervades his works when he refers to
 the

the situation of a professed writer, she maintained that large allowances ought to be made for the sensibility of unpatronized merit, conscious of desert and struggling under calamity. She added, that the situation of the moralist in his early years precluded him from entering into those more refined classes of society, whose amiable polish might have softened the asperities of his natural character. But since the world already possessed many elegant instructors, who knew how to aim the lighter shafts of satire, and to blend improvement with amusement, perhaps the lover of literature would not regret the circumstances that gave him one less urbane moralist, whose austere sense exhibited the noblest model of energetic composition and exalted principle.

“Your justification, madam,” said Fitzosborne, “is conclusive. The page
“ of

" of Johnson will ever be resorted to by
 " the lover of variety, and will claim
 " the appropriate commendations which
 " you have given it, from minds capa-
 " ble of appreciating his real worth.
 " He is too profound to be the idol of
 " the [million : and as his beauties can
 " only be relished by an understanding
 " as vigorous as his own, so his precepts
 " seem calculated for dispositions that
 " resemble him in firmness. On such
 " strong minds his tendency to super-
 " stition can produce no bad effects."

" My acquaintance is too limited,"
 rejoined the countess, " for me to know
 " a person to whom I could not safely
 " recommend the works of Johnson."

" I beg your pardon," interrupted
 Edward. " I should have many objec-
 " tions to lady Arabella's seeing the
 " passage which has wrought your mind
 " into its present state of *high* enthusiasm.

" The

" The uncommon susceptibility and
 " delicacy of her character would make
 " her feel painful alarms, while I see
 " you only indulge a ' fine frenzy.' In
 " a conversation you lately had with
 " her, even some of your guarded ex-
 " pressions have caused her the most
 " distressing agitation."

Lady Monteith recollected that she
 was talking to a lover, and determined
 to endure a little puerility. She ac-
 knowledged, that it was natural for
 Arabella to seem depressed immediately
 after the loss of a friend who had acted
 the part of a foster-mother to her, and
 she promised to be very cautious in fu-
 ture. " But," continued she, " I must
 " own that the invisible agency of se-
 " parated spirits is a very favourite theme
 " with me ; and though, contrary to
 " the opinion of the Abyssinian sage, I
 " could affirm, that we never have any

“certain evidence that the dead are
“permitted to become objects of our
“senses, I have long rejoiced in the
“hope that our departed friends are
“the agents employed by over-ruling
“Providence to perform offices of care
“and tenderness to their surviving com-
“nexions. This thought has most fre-
“quently occurred to me, as I have
“bent over my sleeping children, and I
“have fancied glorified beings watched
“our unconscious hours with similar
“attention. When I was once threat-
“ened with the loss of my eldest darling,
“I found sensible consolation in the idea
“of its becoming a guardian cherub to
“sustain the innocence of its sisters
“through a dangerous world, and to
“receive my parting spirit at the hour
“of my dissolution.”

While the countess spoke, her radiant
eyes were suffused with tears. Fitzos-
borne,

borne, checking some unsubdued struggles of conscience, which almost tempted him to wish he could enjoy such visionary delights, coolly replied to her energetic speech : “ I should be very sorry, madam, to interrupt those agreeable reveries which in minds of your temperature can *rarely* be prejudicial. I shall only state the dangerous consequences of such illusions becoming general. What a tremendous superstructure of imposition might priestcraft erect upon such a visionary basis ! You do not pretend, madam, to say, that your hopes rest upon any real foundation. The nature of the soul has hitherto eluded inquiry. It may in time become capable of absolute definition ; and though the age is not at present sufficiently enlightened to afford absolute proof of this supposed immaterial substance being only a
“ more

" more exquisite configuration of perish-
 " able atoms, incapable of distinct exist-
 " ence, the glorious epocha of truth and
 " reason is too near to allow us to believe
 " the possibility of spectral appearances,
 " or even of spiritual agency, in the
 " manner your imagination prompts you
 " to wish."

Though lady Monteith was no deep
 theologian, she had heard of the mille-
 nium, and the suspension of consciousness
 in the disembodied soul; and she con-
 cluded that Fitzosborne was a convert
 to those doctrines. She was by no means
 aware of the deeper tendency of his
 views; yet, as she thought there was
 something peculiar in his opinions, she
 wished to fathom him upon these sub-
 jects. She knew enough of the world
 to be convinced, that divinity was not
 the favourite study of young men of fa-
 shion; but she knew too, that deep
 learning

learning was equally excluded from polite circles. Fitzosborne had been announced to her as the "mirror of information;" and she saw nothing ridiculous in the idea, that a man of reading should devote a part of his attention to the study of the noblest truths. Indifference on serious subjects was, as far as her observations extended, combined with ignorance and a general relaxation of mind. Fitzosborne's manner evinced energy and attention. She had often felt indignant at hearing the witling attempt to ridicule what he did not understand, or the libertine seek to invalidate what he feared to believe. But Fitzosborne possessed too much real talent to envy the wreath that fades upon the coxcomb's brow, and his conduct seemed too correct to supply him with a motive for taking shelter in infidelity. His sentiments on every subject were moral and liberal.

His

His self-command was exemplary ; his information general ; his reasoning, though flowery, ingenious, and, in lady Monteith's opinion, judicious. I have already observed, that her parts were rather brilliant than profound. It will not therefore be surprising, that she should be easily entangled in the snare of a syllogism, or that the unsuspecting sincerity of her heart should render her a dupe to any one who took the trouble to play the specious consummate hypocrite.

In forming her opinion of the dangerous character which was now exposed to her observation, she had fallen into the same error of precipitate judgment which she had been guilty of in the case of lord Monteith. She now supplied talents with as much liberality as she formerly created virtues. Experience had convinced her, that love is
apt

apt to look through magnifying optics ; yet, though one pleasing phantom faded after another, something really estimable still remained ; and on her comparing her own lot with that of others, she found abundant reason to acquiesce in a state of resigned content. Recalling some of Mrs. Evans's early precepts, she had laboured to subdue those more exquisite refinements of sensibility, which vainly look for consummate enjoyment in this world ; and, without feeling too lively regrets for the want of unattainable good, she enjoyed the cup of blessing which Providence tendered to her acceptance. She was in this state of mind when her acquaintance with Fitzosborne commenced. The peculiarity of his character drew her attention. The evident infelicity of his connubial prospects attracted pity. His conduct awakened esteem, and his intellectual superiority excited

excited admiration. Neither did she discover from what secret failing in herself that admiration sprung, nor that Vanity is as great a magnifier as Love.

Fitzosborne had been so careful to veil his scepticism in ambiguous phrases, that lady Monteith's solicitude to discover his principles really arose from an idea that their singularity chiefly proceeded from their excellence, and that by conversing with him she should strengthen her own convictions. She had often lamented, that lord Monteith's volatile temper deprived her of that supporting judgment and directing care which the conjugal institution was intended to afford to the softer sex. Though not doubtful of the propriety of her own conduct, she naturally wished it should receive the approbation of an observing eye; and a consciousness of her own abilities was attended with some repugnance

repugnance to their "wasting their sweetness in the desert air." The friend, the adviser she had long wished for, seemed now to present himself to her view in the person of an accomplished intelligent gentleman of irreproachable worth, who would soon become a near relation. Every idea of impropriety was removed by this latter consideration; and, with the usual imbecility of short-sighted mortals, she fancied her character might acquire additional lustre by imbibing the splendor of so fair an archetype. She had not discovered, that

All was false, and hollow; though his tongue
 Dropp'd manna, and could make the worse appear
 The better reason, to perplex and dash
 Maturest councils; for his thoughts were low;
 To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
 Tim'rous and slothful; yet he pleas'd the ear.

Her endeavours to divest this "Demon
 of sentiment" of his cherubic veil
 were

were, however ineffectual. Wrapped in his darling mysticism, he defied her scrutiny. His knowledge of the human heart convinced him how powerful an engine secrecy becomes when wielded by a skilful hand, and opposed to the restless spirit of female curiosity. But while he eluded her inquiries, and avoided a full discovery of his own opinions, he threw out enough to convince her, that they were not only extraordinary but permanent; and by complimenting the sagacious avidity with which she seized every sentiment he seemed unwarily to disclose; he roused the mingled solicitude of inquisitiveness and vanity, and formed an interest which he determined to improve.

The conversation ended on his part with a panegyric on morality, which he loaded with ostentatious ornaments; and a philippic against the illiberality of suppos-

ing that exalted minds needed any other inducement to act rightly than the abstract loveliness of virtue. His last observation was prefaced by a solemn avowal of his own respect for religion, which he acknowledged to be a most useful invention, and a necessary restriction upon the untutored part of mankind. He left lady Monteith in a sort of maze, regretting that he had not been more explicit on those points in which he had confessed his opinions differed from hers, delighted with his pure morality, and enchanted with his conversation.

Her reverie was interrupted by lady Arabella's requesting the favour of her opinion, whether tiffany jessamine, or crape roses, would make the most elegant festoon. She listened with perplexed attention to a recapitulation of the light airiness of the former ornament, and the quiet accommodation of the

latter; and she felt mortified at being obliged to witness the effect of their alternate display on her ladyship's court dress. While her eyes were fixed upon vacancy, and her thoughts were regretting the wilful negligence, which would give to Fitzosborne a frivolous unintelligent partner, she, with the indifference of Swift's Vanessa, pronounced an unconscious preference of the crape roses. This fiat was decisive, and lady Arabella returned to her own apartment with her maid and her milliner; a happy groupe, till the discovery, that a lady whom lady Arabella hated wore crape roses, drew from the distressed fair one several pathetic ejaculations on the peculiar unhappiness of her own lot, in being thus prevented from having the prettiest trimming in the world. Some tender tears were dropped, which were placed to the account of her aunt; and after a

few expressions, which from a person of less delicacy might be termed scolding, she dismissed her terrified auditors with a declaration that she was very low, and could not bear contradiction and disappointment.

Meantime lady Monteith had resumed her studies, and began to discover some of those faults in her beloved Johnson which Fitzosborne had pointed out, when lord Monteith entered the room, highly elated that he had just made himself complete master of "Britons strike home," and entreating her to accompany him upon the harp. She complied; but the smile of acquiescence was more of the pensive than of the exhilarating kind; and her thoughts wandered to the prohibited haunts of useless regrets for the past, and vain anticipations of the future. But while, in her career of impossibilities, she was beginning

ning to wish that Monteith possessed the intelligent mind of Fitzosborne, her careless hand struck a false chord, and a mechanical impulse aroused her attention time enough to answer her lord's inquiries, if she was well, and if any thing made her unhappy. His affectionate solicitude restored her mind to its usual temperament, and she chided herself for indulging a thought inconsistent with the gratitude and esteem which she owed to her plighted consort. She recollected, that different excellencies belong to different characters; and that it is the abuse, not the want, of a talent which stamps criminality upon any one. She made allowances for the force of habit conspiring with strong passions, unrestrained by an expensive, yet defective, education, and inflamed by the seductions of affluence and uncontrolled freedom of action. While these reflec-

tions successively occupied her mind, a tender sweetness diffused itself over her countenance, and her hand executed "Britons strike home" entirely to his lordship's satisfaction.

CHAP. XXVII.

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers and dukes, and all their sweeping train,
And garters, stars, and coronets appear,
And in soft sounds, "Your Grace" salutes the ear.
POPE.

FITZOSBORNE'S thoughts were now so engrossed by his intended attack on the principles and honour of lady Monteith, that he felt as little interested about the event of his engagements with lady Arabella as if the marriage ceremony had really taken place. He was roused from this insensibility by the noble viscount his brother, who, having procured a copy of the redoubtable settlement, which I have before mentioned, swore upon his honour (his lordship, though very fond of this oath, was never known to be forsworn) that the terms were too hard

for any man above a shoe-black to abide by. "I would have you by all means, "Ned," said he, "make a better bargain for yourself. The girl is immensely fond of you, that is evident; "and a fellow with a tenth part of your "address would make the pretty driver accede to any thing. Can't "you give her a little sentiment upon "the occasion, and tell her, that by reserving all her fortune in her own "power, it will be absolutely impossible "for her ever to enjoy the sublime "gratification of receiving obligations "from the person she loves? Can't you "flourish too upon the provision in case "of separation and divorce, and declare "that the frigorific idea petrifies your "whole frame? Be master of her fortune, "however, at all events; for let me "tell you, my dear lad, a wife's affections in this age are but a transferable
" com-

"commodity of little permanent value,
"I assure you."

Edward felt too well convinced of his influence to doubt the possibility of his acquiring the glittering prize upon his own terms; and he sketched in his mind the only conditions upon which he would consent to give the lady the honour of his name. These conditions were remarkable for nothing but their being a direct contradiction to lady Madelina's plan. But on his first conversation with lady Arabella upon the subject he discovered, that he had greatly mistaken her character when he attributed to it any degree of pliability in pecuniary matters. She, indeed, loved to squander with thoughtless profusion; but that very love of squandering suggested the propriety of retaining the power of doing so; and the lovers parted with great mutual dissatisfaction: Edward

convinced that his merits would confer honour upon any lady on whom he bestowed his hand, and lady Arabella persuaded that a younger brother has no right to expect a higher office than to be his wife's steward, if he be so lucky as to engage the good opinion of a woman of fortune. Both seemed inclined to bring their matrimonial pretensions to a fresh market. He thought that his person might attract some fair one equally rich and less mercenary; and she knew, that when people calculate upon good matches, there is always as great a difference between present possession and reversionary expectation, as there is between the comparative splendor of a baronial and a ducal coronet. The gentleman pondered upon the propriety of discontinuing his addresses; but the lady hastened his deliberations by informing him, that if his

visits

visits at Portland-place were upon her account, she begged she might not in future interrupt his important avocations; and thus Mr. Fitzosborne was suddenly reduced to the situation of a *rejected* swain, a condition which the versatility of his talents knew how to improve.

Lady Arabella's frivolity, selfishness, and avowed expectation of making superior conquests, did not discredit the tale which Fitzosborne told of his dismissal. The blunt integrity of lord Monteith's character took fire at his sister's evident dereliction of the principles of honour, constancy, and female delicacy; and the reluctance with which the specious Edward appeared to discover her caprice irritated his ardent temper still more. He charged her with base infidelity and gross indecorum; and she evaded the charge by urging,

that she was a free independent being, and accountable to no one for her actions, which were the result of her opinions; and no one had any right to scrutinize the opinions of others. The earl raved against this heterodox doctrine, because it militated against his wish of supremacy, without discovering that there was a degree of ingratitude in the application of these principles against the interest of the master from whom she had acquired them; and her ladyship resolved never to mislead her husband by furnishing a previous instance of her submission to her brother's authority. She removed on the very evening of the dispute to the house of lord viscount Fitzosborne.

In order to explain the reason of her choosing that asylum, I must unriddle a little Machiavelian policy. The situation of the noble house of Fitzosborne was
become

become so very precarious in point of credit, that the representative of its honours, like Shakespeare's Percy, had long "cast many a northern look to see the Frazer bring up his powers." The illustrious viscount indeed could not give himself a legal title to that spacious inheritance which now centered in lady Arabella; but his fraternal wish of transferring it to his own family was not quite disinterested. Edward had ever appeared too abstracted, too generous, and too superior to low mercenary views, to deny a brother the loan of a few thousands, and his indifference to money was in the viscount's opinion the cause of his present disappointment; for had his whole heart been engrossed by the desire of advancing his fortune, the pretty bird might have beat her gay plumage in useless vexation, at finding herself

herself surrounded by too many toils
ever to hope for recovered liberty.

In opposition to those saturnine censors who affirm that a genteel pair never think or act in concert, I have to relate a scheme in which the viscount and his lady cordially co-operated, and which, though it might not terminate in an invocation of Venus's antique doves, promised to produce a modern pigeon. The farce commenced with a visit from the viscountess to her dear friend; during which she heard with mingled surprize and grief that Mr. Fitzosborne's expectations were so very illiberal, and his temper so very uncomplying, that the connection was dissolved. She commended the laudable spirit which dictated lady Arabella's resolution of sooner breaking her heart than submitting to unjustifiable demands; but when she added,

added, that, by thus acting with proper regard to female dignity, she had excited the resentment of her brother, the indignation of her sympathizing friend exceeded all bounds. With bitter sarcasms on the indelicacy of lord Monteith's interference, she intreated her to remove directly to lord Fitzosborne's, and assured her, that offended beauty would find a protector in the viscount, who would either compel Edward to make proper concessions, or disown him for a brother. There was something truly *Roman* in this sentiment. It was expressed with becoming dignity; and the viscountess, still farther to enforce it, added, " You will get a little more
" into the world, my dear, from which,
" it is certain, you have lately been too
" much secluded. We have frequently
" little private parties, at which you
" cannot object to taking a card, for
" nobody

"nobody will know any thing about it,
 "so that there cannot be any indeco-
 "rum. I protest, I think you grow
 "more bewitching every hour. Your
 "mourning becomes you so exquisitely,
 "that in pity to the world I ought to
 "propose keeping you shut up, that
 "other belles may have a little chance;
 "but I own I am malicious enough to
 "wish to give a little fillip to Edward's
 "fears. Nothing is so animating as a
 "strong fit of jealousy, and I know that
 "to make fresh conquests you need
 "only appear." So friendship urged;
 and its arguments were conclusive.

The parties might now be said to be
 fairly drawn up in battle array; for, not
 to yield to the Fitzosbornes in hospita-
 lity, lord Monteith had insisted that Ed-
 ward should become his guest; and,
 though their tastes and dispositions were
 by no means in unison, he fancied himself
 highly

highly gratified with the companion he had selected; and he was much too warm an advocate for what he esteemed an injured character to permit the countess to continue neutral. Fitzosborne's affected dejection soon interested her feeling heart; and, though she could scarcely consider the loss of an Arabella to be a misfortune, she felt that great allowance should be made for the force of disappointment upon a mind so strongly susceptible. Still incredulous as to the reality of his attachment, she was inclined to believe, that after he had acceded to the proposals of his friends, a sense of honour and the force of habit had produced in his refined disposition a recurrence of the same images, which might be almost supposed equivalent to preference. The void which female caprice had left in his imagination must be at present painful, and
though

though an enlightened understanding would soon occupy the chasm with a more brilliant set of ideas, delicate sensibility might be allowed to start at the illiberal ridicule which a censorious world is ever ready to bestow on a jilted swain or a forsaken damsel. Beside, without being mercenary, might not a prudent man regret the loss of a splendid establishment? To soften that regret she exerted all the brilliant powers of her mind, and all the fascinating graces of her numerous accomplishments. Charmed out of his pretended melancholy, Fitzosborne seemed to bestow a listless attention, varying the contour of his expressions as the style of her attractions required: Sometimes terminating his silent adulation by exclaiming, "Happy Monteith!" At another expatiating in praise of friendship; or, if he aimed at making the most

most forcible impression, he only interrupted the vivacity of her tones by the frequency of his sighs. But in either instance he was equally careful that lord Monteith should hear both the exclamations and the sighs.

Disappointed by perceiving that his dejection did not yield to time, and more than ever convinced that love could not have made such an incurable wound, the countess began to suspect that this disorder was constitutional, and she proposed his applying to society and change of scene, the usual recipe for a melancholic humour. His constant rejection of invitations induced her to pique his pride. "Do you know," said she, "that lady Arabella flourishes in the first circles, and is become so very irresistible, that not only wits and beaux write madrigals to her, but
" a cer-

" a certain young duke of our acquaint-
 " ance is thought to be seriously en-
 " tangled? They are to be at the opera
 " together to-night in his grace's box.
 " Now I intend to go, and take you for
 " my *cecisbeo*. What say you to my
 " scheme? It will be generous to shew
 " the young adventurer how Armida
 " metamorphoses her knights before he
 " is irrecoverably enchanted."

" I am very willing to exhibit my
 " woe-begone face, if the publication
 " of it will afford you any amusement,"
 returned Fitzosborne. " The duke
 " and I shall not exchange any angry
 " glances, and I honour lady Arabella's
 " sincerity too much to feel any resent-
 " ment at her conduct. She has only
 " exercised the indubitable right of
 " every human being. Her heart has
 " changed its possessor, and she has
 " obeyed its dictates."

" Does

"Does not your candour grant rather too great a latitude here?" inquired the countess.

"Considering the prejudices of the times, I certainly do. But is there not a great degree of cruelty in requiring constancy from those minds that have not sufficient fortitude to be really immutable? And after all, as we can only assume the appearance of it, is it not also unjust, and wicked too, as we create a necessity for hypocrisy? To diseases in different constitutions we prescribe different remedies; but the disorders of the mind must all be cured by one universal panacea. Surely it is only the tyranny of custom that prevents us from adapting our moral code to every character, instead of stretching dissimilar minds on the gigantic iron couch designed for a Procrustes."

Lady

Lady Monteith felt startled. She recollected that where much was given much would be required; yet this text related to dissimilar powers of doing good, and could not possibly be urged in extenuation of any vicious action. But Fitzosborne interrupted her musings by assuming a gayer air than he had lately exhibited. "I see," said he, "I shall have some difficulty to reconcile you to *all* my opinions; but, no matter; when I legislate for the world, don't flatter yourself, that I shall propose a lax system to you. I know how to estimate your mental ability, and *your* code shall be rigorous and coercive."

"Dare you repeat this speech to-night at the opera in the hearing of lady Arabella?" said the countess.

"There requires no courage to repeat an undisputed truth in the hearing
"ing

"ing of the whole world." Lady Monteith forgot her disapprobation of the novelty, singularity, and laxity of Fitzosborne's opinions; and as she drove to form her party for the evening, she only remembered his happy talent at a compliment.

CHAP. XXVIII.

It is Jealousy's peculiar nature
To swell small things to great; nay out of nothing
To conjure much.

YOUNG.

THE polite world were so engrossed by engagements, that lady Monteith found it impossible to form a party to her satisfaction. Exclusive of the pale votaries, who sacrifice peace, health, fortune, and honour at the shrine of Pharo, several were engaged to the Quizzes, and more to the Cabinet of Monkies, which was just opened. The fair countess could scarcely get any body into her party but those who were left out of all others: and they who refused her secretly laughed at the rusticity of supposing

posing any body, who lived in the world, could defer till two o'clock the important business of fixing the evening occupation. She was forced to be contented with an antiquated belle of the last age, and a would-be fine lady of the present, to whom she was lucky enough to add a beau, sir Hargrave Nappy, a gentleman, who though known by every body to be incurably deaf, had long laboured under the tantalizing desire of wishing to be thought a connoisseur in music. With this design he constantly attended the opera, where his unvarying countenance and fixed posture procured him the appellation of the pillar of melody.

Surrounded by the groupe I have described, and escorted by the gallant Edward Fitzosborne, lady Monteith entered a side-box opposite to that which was occupied by lady Arabella's

party. Had Geraldine intended to have selected foils for her own person, the females in her train were most happily gifted by nature for that purpose; and in point of celebrity they were just enough known to make it difficult for any lady to decline being their companion. Repeated mortifications had taught them the arcana of high life; and the protection of a countess was sufficiently flattering to confine them to that humble part which they supposed her ladyship intended they should sustain. Claiming sir Hargrave for their share of the beaux, they invited him to seat himself between them, and they addressed all their observations to him, without once turning their heads to listen to the conversation which passed behind them. But sir Hargrave was so absorbed in opera ecstasies, that unless his eye happened to inform him that he

was

was peculiarly addressed, all the *smart things* passed utterly unnoticed. Indeed the only honour that they ever received was a half bend, after which the amateur resumed his former erect position, and with one hand in his bosom, and the other (on which was a fine antique) beating time on the front of the box, he repeated, like Shakespeare's Lorenzo, "Mark the music."

It is a very great pity that these unfortunate *smart things* should be wholly lost. The prescient Muse at least must be supposed to have heard them; but I feel so anxious to return to the rest of the party, that I must defer the recapitulation of them to some other opportunity, promising, if possible, either to interweave them with the history of my travels, or, if I have no other means of introduction, to give them to the world

in the form of "More last words of Mrs. Prudentia."

The blooming Geraldine never appeared so enchanting. She perceived, with a degree of pleasure, in which she did not suspect any criminality, that the adventures of her box proved infinitely more interesting to lady Arabella, than the devoirs of the noble duke whom she wished to exhibit as her captive. Fitzosborne was in excellent spirits. The countess enjoyed the circumstance. She thought he had been extremely ill used, and she applauded the spirit which could repay insult with contempt. His attentions to herself, considered in this point of view, gave her sincere satisfaction. She returned them. Her natural vivacity, combining with accidental circumstances, hurried her into a degree of mirth, which, to those who were unacquainted with its motives, appeared

peared to border upon coquetry, more than the innocence of her heart and the rectitude of her principles would have permitted.

But while the lamb, basking in the blaze of noon, bounds over the flowery hillock, the wolf watches its haunts and meditates its destruction. To exemplify my pastoral simile: Fitzosborne saw with diabolical exultation, that Geraldine's behaviour had attracted general attention. He doubted not but calumny would be ready to frame some malignant whisper, and he understood the maxim which teaches that "virtue rarely survives the loss of reputation." Though he conceived that the powers of his own invention were fully equal to overthrow any defence which lady Monteith might make, he did not disdain adventitious aid. His watchful eye, though seemingly only fixed on the lovely form

which was seated by him, had discovered lord Monteith in the pit. He perceived too that he was attentive to his lady's behaviour, and he fancied he read displeasure in his countenance. "Can "this thoughtless animal," said Fitzosborne to himself, "have any thing "like jealousy in his composition? He "seems less careless than usual. If so, "it is indeed above my hopes."

While he ruminated on this idea, the door of the box opened, and a young man of fashion stepped in. He was an intimate friend of lord Monteith's; and, seeing the countess in what he thought a new point of view, he was desirous of sharing the pleasure which her conversation afforded. This did not increase the gaiety of the party. The appearance of a stranger caused a temporary interruption. Geraldine recollected her thoughts, and her natural delicacy

delicacy shrunk from an intrusion which, though sanctioned by the freedom of our present system of manners, seemed inconsistent with strict politeness. His style of address too was bold and familiar, very different from the insinuating sensibility of Fitzosborne, who, though conscious of distinction, never appeared to presume upon favour. She determined to mark her approbation of his behaviour by her own conduct, and, instead of the confidence and vivacity which marked her deportment previous to the entrance of her new guest, she became as cold and circumscribed in her answers as the rules of civility could possibly admit.

Lord Monteith now entered the box; and, as he never concealed any sentiment, the displeasure he felt was strongly marked in his countenance. He had

heard his lady pointed out as uncommonly beautiful by a stranger who sat next him; and though he was very well pleased with that plaudit, the subsequent observations were not satisfactory. To the words, "Charming creature!" were added, "and so gay, so lively too" "in her manners! what a happy man" "that gentleman must be!" The stranger was just arrived from the country, and unwittingly supposed that a married pair would not forfeit their claims to celebrity by appearing at the same entertainment in the same party. Every exclamation which he uttered in compliment of the affectionate attention of this peerless couple increased the earl's restlessness; and, no longer able to conceal his own right to the charmer who thus fascinated all eyes, he suddenly rose and joined her. He had seen nothing in her manner which

which custom did not justify, and Fitz-osborne was of all others the friend in whom he could most confide. Yet, without knowing what to blame, he thought the laws of custom required revisal.

Geraldine had not that species of fortitude which sees displeasure on a husband's brow without any sentiment but exultation. She was ignorant of those principles, which teach the dissipated wife who has long renounced the power of pleasing to exult in the capacity of giving pain. The light heart which had prompted the gay repartee became loaded with sudden depression, and the frolic smile vanished with the unaffected vivacity which had given it birth.

The world had much to say on the adventures of this evening. Poor Arabella! every body was very sorry for her. Lady Monteith had certainly

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spirited.

spirited away her lover. Her exultation upon the occasion was rather too marked for a woman of prodigious decorum; and really, if she did continue to flirt it so notoriously in public, she must renounce her pretensions to such *very* strict propriety, and consent to be thought no better than other people.

At coming out of the opera Fitzosborne tapped lord Monteith upon the shoulder, and asked him, how he disposed of himself for the evening. "At home, if you have nothing better to propose:" was the answer. "There is a spirited set just gone to Brookes's," continued Fitzosborne; "suppose we follow them to observe manners and characters." His lordship had no objection.

Early in lord Monteith's life his name was unfortunately familiar to the frequenters

frequenters of the gaming-table and the heroes of the turf. His attachment to the lovely Geraldine lessened that dangerous propensity ; and, though she had failed in her endeavours to inspire a love of elegant pleasures, indifference for his former pursuits had gradually increased to disgust : the less pernicious sports of the field, and a boyish turn of amusement, succeeding in occupying a mind too volatile to seek pleasure out of its own resources. But since his lordship's disgust and forbearance arose more from the absence of temptation than from any fixed principle, the sight of the card table and the rattle of the dice-box excited passions which increased the unsubdued emotion that he had felt at the opera.

He proposed to Fitzosborne to form a party. Edward pleaded a total want of skill ; protested, that he had a fixed

abhorrence of the gaming-table ; and declared, that he never visited those scenes, except to study the human character, and to moralize on the fatal effects of the impetuous passion of avarice. His reflections were soon finished that evening, for in a little time he professed himself wearied with the scene, and he proposed to lord Monteith that they should retire to a private room. There too he felt the moments drag heavily, and it was mutually agreed to enliven them by a friendly game at picquet.

The stake first proposed was trifling: Monteith was unsuccessful. He transferred his latent resentment to the cards, which he stamped under his foot ; called for a new pack, and insisted upon doubling the sum they played for. The events of the evening put several hundreds into Fitzosborne's pocket ; and his success might still have been greater, but

but neither his friendship nor his honour would (he protested) permit him to urge his good fortune any further. "Your temper," said he, "is too warm; and I hope the little vexations of this evening will convince you of the necessity of self-control, or at least prevent you from trying your chance with those who might take the ungenerous advantage of your agitation, which I scorn to use."

"I value not money," said Monteith angrily! "nor can the cursed cards agitate me. A truce with your morality therefore, Edward; when I want a monitor, it is time enough for you to invest yourself with that dignity."

"I am not in a resentful humour," returned Fitzosborne smiling. "I shall therefore very gladly resign my dignity, as you term it. Indeed, I have been a little unlucky in the exercise

“ of it this evening. Yet if my well-
 “ meant admonitions are but remem-
 “ bered by my friends, the disinterest-
 “ edness of my attachment will enable
 “ me to support a little transient acri-
 “ mony.”

“ Where else did you play the lec-
 “ turer?” inquired Monteith, carelessly.

“ Where I saw a little impropriety,”
 replied Fitzosborne, with suppressed sig-
 nificance.

“ And did you succeed no better
 “ than you have done with me?” con-
 tinued the earl, with increasing anxiety.

“ I don’t know. The character I
 “ had to deal with was more *guarded*
 “ than you are.”

“ What caused your reproof?” said
 his lordship, with affected ease, and ap-
 parently occupied in sorting the cards
 into three divisions.

“ I be-

“ I believe nothing but the too great nicety of my own feelings : for on reviewing the affair I cannot see any thing essentially wrong ; and I begin to think those rules which impose superior caution on persons who are objects of public admiration unnecessarily severe.”

“ The sentiments of ladies,” resumed Monteith, “ are generally more delicate in these points than those of men. Suppose you make Geraldine your casuist in this business ? She will tell you if you went too far in your admonitions.”

“ By no means,” said Fitzosborne, snatching the cards. “ Come, enough of one subject. Shall we have another game ?”

“ No ! I am tired ; and as I love to have every doubtful business cleared up, we will go home to supper, and

“ I will

“ I will mention your uneasiness to lady
 “ Monteith, that you may sleep with a
 “ disburdened conscience.”

Fitzosborne started. “ How came
 “ *you* to discover that the hasty opi-
 “ nion which I injudiciously uttered,
 “ really displeased her? Let me con-
 “ jure you, my lord, by all our friend-
 “ ship, endeavour to restore me to her
 “ favour, and be convinced that I can
 “ only have forfeited it through inad-
 “ vertence.”

Lord Monteith smiled with the con-
 scious superiority which attends a suc-
 cessful feint, and assured the alarmed
 Fitzosborne, that, if he would candidly
 acknowledge the nature of his offence,
 he might depend upon his interposition.

“ It really,” returned Edward, “ was
 “ nothing of consequence. You have
 “ often charged me with possessing a
 “ stoical sternness, and I confess some
 “ of

"of my notions are austere. The
"countess was in very lively spirits
"this evening."

"Was she?" said Monteith, biting
his lips.

"I said something to her, I forget
"what, respecting the ease with which
"British matrons publicly permit the
"advances of notorious libertines. I
"beg your pardon, Monteith, I know
"he is your friend; but I must own I
"repeated this with more energy when
"sir Richard Vernon came into the
"box. You know his notions are
"avowedly licentious."

"It was very friendly of you," ex-
claimed his lordship, with a voice con-
vulsed with passion. "Did he talk to
"lady Monteith in an improper style?"

"By no means. Yet there was some-
"what freer in his address than I should
"have approved had the lady been my
"wife;

" wife ; and I felt for my absent friend.
 " The blaze of your Geraldine's charms,
 " my lord, is lost upon me. Beauty can
 " never more affect my heart. But
 " I too well recollect the emotions it
 " has caused not to wish sir Richard to
 " avoid lady Monteith, at least if he
 " respects his own tranquillity."

" And could Geraldine resent your
 " friendly observation?" interrupted
 Monteith.

" She only answered, that I was grown
 " splenetic, for public places sanctioned
 " these intrusions. I however observed,
 " that she did not speak to me any more
 " during the whole evening."

" I detest caprice. She shall ac-
 " knowledge the friendliness of your
 " motives."

" Oh ! for heaven's sake ! do not in-
 " terfere in that style. You will alarm
 " her pride, and sink me for ever in her
 " opinion.

“ opinion. Beside, you will utterly prevent any future effort on my part gently to restrain those very agreeable spirits which may be liable to misconception. To own the truth, I thought to-night she attracted particular attention.”

“ Her prudence,” exclaimed the earl, who, though he had imbibed the poison of insinuation, was yet offended by a direct attack, “ is as exemplary as her character is spotless.”

“ True,” replied Fitzosborne; “ but think of the malignity of the world.”

“ Who dares to impeach her conduct?” continued her lord, with increased violence.

“ What does not envy and calumny dare?” cried the sentimental torturer.
 “ But I see my friendship is troublesome.
 “ However, Monteith, recollect, that
 “ you

“you artfully wound the secret out of
 “me, and therefore have no right to be
 “displeased at the disclosure.”

“Your hand, Edward. Excuse my
 “warmth. My wife is too dear to me,
 “to allow me to hear the least censure
 “cast upon her behaviour with indif-
 “ference. I venerate the excellence of
 “your heart, and I love your frankness.
 “I am frank myself, though I own I
 “did use a little circumlocution to dis-
 “cover what you certainly never in-
 “tended me to know. I was too subtle
 “there. Was I not? But come, think
 “no more of it. Perhaps lady Mon-
 “teith might be a little wrong; but I
 “know you both meant well, and she
 “will readily forgive you.”

“Then, as a pledge of your renewed
 “esteem, let me entreat you never to
 “mention this affair to her. I may
 “have been too susceptible, and have
 “mistaken

“mistaken her silence for resentment ;
“for I am convinced I misconstrued
“her preceding behaviour.”

Monteith pledged his honour for secrecy, and endeavoured to dissipate his chagrin by humming an air. But the idea that Fitzosborne had seen something wrong in Geraldine, and his recollection of the stranger's conversation, sunk deep into his mind, and clouded the gay vacuity of his thoughts with spectres fearful as “the green-eyed monster” which haunted the frank and noble Moor, who, like lord Monteith, “thought men honest who but seemed to be so.”

CHAP. XXIX.

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can Censure 'scape ; back-wounding Calumny
The whitest virtue strikes.

SHAKESPEARE.

VICE always appears to be most alluring when its machinations are crowned with success. During the dangerous period of youth, while the passions are warm, the imagination lively, and the judgment weak, the spectator feels a bias in favour of that adventurer whose course (marked by ingenuity) leads to a speedy attainment of his desires. But could Inexperience reflect, and Impetuosity pause, the couch of even the most prosperous villain would present no alluring spectacle. Fitzosborne's plans had hitherto answered his wishes. His specious manners

manners had acquired the esteem of the countess, and the unbounded confidence of her lord. He had obtained a firm footing in the family; had sown the baleful germ of suspicion, so fatal to domestic peace; and the displeasure and gloom which occasionally pervaded lord Monteith's countenance convinced him that it had taken root. Calumny was prepared to doubt the stability of Geraldine's honour; and Calumny, like a pestilential blast, can taint the innocence it assails. To these engines of seduction might be added the sophistical principles of false philosophy, which, though cautiously administered and often rejected, still, like the delved mine, possess a power capable of subverting the firmest moral virtue, if not founded on the rock of religion.

Yet Fitzosborne was wretched. The atrocity of his designs haunted his pillow,

not

not with a sense of remorse, but with the apprehension of danger. The situation of the lady was exalted; her character was exemplary; her connections were respectable; her husband, as he had lately discovered, was not only tenacious of her reputation, and vain of her attractions, but also conscious of her merits, and sincerely attached to her person. Though the earl's apprehension was peculiarly slow, his passions were as remarkably vehement; and his skill at the various offensive weapons was so great, that his opponent could have very little chance of escaping with life, if called to make the *amende honorable*. Fitzosborne's fortunes were almost desperate. Worldly prudence seemed, therefore, to point out the necessity of applying his ingenuity in devising some plan of improving his circumstances, instead of wasting his talents in a pursuit which

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which only promised danger, or, to speak according to his ideas, "barren honour."

Notwithstanding the appearance of open hostility, he held a private correspondence with the viscount's family; and his intelligence from thence confirmed his own opinion, that the breach with lady Arabella was not totally irreparable. Her vexation at his attention to lady Monteith was too lively to be concealed, and too sincere to yield to the hopes which the noble duke's increasing admiration inspired. In vain did she recollect detecting him incognito at the theatre, looking at her through his opera-glass. In vain did she remember her more splendid triumph, when he presented her with a ticket for lady Fillagree's fancied ball, inscribed "To the fairest." Fitzosborne saw his assiduities without emotion. The noble

duke's sentiments were known to be inauspicious to marriage; and no lady, who had not absolutely determined to be a duchess, could even affect to find satisfaction in his conversation.

Fitzosborne poized the chance of lucrative advantage with precision; and, as he had no inclination for sleeping in the bed of honour, he bestowed some forethought on the hazards he ran by pursuing his illicit designs against the lovely countess. Since he deemed his success certain, it was unnecessary to examine the effect of a disappointment. Great prudence, great caution, and great morality, might prevent a *rencontre*. He might be unwilling to lift his arm against the life of his friend; he might respect the laws of his country; or his health might impose the necessity of a tour for its restoration. The last step would be the most convenient, in case
lord

lord Monteith applied for legal damages, since, however large the sum given by the verdict, absence and incapacity would be a receipt in full. The next step of the injured husband must be a divorce, and the deserted lady could not then object to taking refuge in a second marriage, which was the only chance of restoring her again to the world, if not with untainted, at least with a convalescent character. Geraldine was an heiress, and it was to be supposed that her settlements were made with proper precaution. Even as a wife she was infinitely more desirable than Arabella; and, though the illiberality of husbands might wish to secure their domestic possessions by an impassable inclosure, modern spirit had proved itself able to surmount every fence; and the lady might give away herself and her property several times over, without calling upon

death to cancel a former bond. The world indeed would at first be angry; but the times were very liberal. People would allow for the force of *irresistible* temptation. They would plead, that it was impossible to forbear adoring such a charming creature. The blame would be happily transferred to my lord, who ought never to have admitted a friend into his family, or to have trusted her out of his sight; and in a little time every body would visit Mr. Fitzosborne and his lady, and perhaps even find them out to be a very worthy and exemplary pair.

Confirmed in his designs not more by his own insidious inclinations than by the false notions which prevail even amongst the more principled part of that important circle called the great world, Fitzosborne prosecuted his nefarious plans; and he determined, that if
fear,

fear, or as he called it prudence, did not check, compunction should not dissuade. Chance, and the credulous confidence of lord Monteith, favoured his wishes. Cards of invitation to lady Fillagree's *petit soupé* had been sent to the Monteiths, and the countess had not only chosen her character, but she had also decorated an Italian tiffany with festoons of violets, in which dress she intended to personify the Perdita of Shakespeare. Her anxious entreaties had prevailed upon her lord to accompany her in the habit of the royal Florizel; and this mark of attachment on her part, and condescension on his, promised the renewal of domestic harmony. The expected evening approached, when a note from the minister requested lord Monteith's attendance in the house of peers. Business of great importance was to be agitated;

a violent opposition was expected; and the honour of his lordship's support would confer a lasting obligation. The earl was not in the habit of courting ministerial favour; he disliked the task of attendance; and the labour of listening to a long debate was always sufficiently terrific to make him prejudge the question. Yet though no one ever took less pains to acquire real authority, he was very well pleased to be thought a man of consequence; and the minister's request was too pressing to be declined. Geraldine wished to give up her engagement; but my lord had fixed upon a plan that would settle every thing, and to which his own dislike of masked balls and fancy suppers gave a determinate stability. It was, that Fitzosborne, instead of spending the evening alone in the library, should be her escort. My lord's dress would fit him pretty exactly, and

and Edward's excuses answered the end for which they were designed, which was to fix my lord most positively in his determinations.

The entertainment was to be given at a villa a little distance from town. Geraldine dressed early; but her heavy heart seemed to anticipate some disastrous issue. My lord came into her dressing-room to see if she looked her character; and while he contemplated the simplicity and exquisite adaption of her ornaments, the apprehensions with which he had been lately tortured returned. "Do not," said he, "dance with Vernon, nor any of that set, if they should ask you. Plead that you are engaged to Fitzosborne, or else say that you are tired."

"Will not that have a singular appearance?" inquired the countess,

“ You have a strange apprehensive-
“ nefs of singularity, Geraldine. Don’t
“ you remember your father’s words,
“ that there is no shame in being the
“ only person who acts as she ought
“ to do?”

“ Suppose then,” said her ladyship,
“ I do not dance at all.”

“ What! when all the world knows
“ that you are very fond of dancing?
“ Is that the way to avoid singularity?
“ And why this aversion to my friend?
“ Cannot you forgive him for offering
“ you some advice which you was too
“ careless to attend to?”

“ My dear lord, there has been some
“ little misunderstanding, certainly. I
“ am far from having any aversion to
“ Fitzosborne, and as far from being
“ offended at his giving me any advice. I
“ do not even recollect the circumstance.”

“ O! you

"O! you give it that turn, do you?
 "But you understand my present pro-
 "hibition, I suppose, and you will re-
 "member it."

"Undoubtedly. And do you re-
 "collect, that depending upon your
 "accompanying me, I have not formed
 "any party. If possible come away
 "from the house, and join me at
 "Richmond."

"You are grown a coward, Geral-
 "dine. However I will come, if I can;
 "but Fitzosborne is surely a sufficient
 "guard. Tell Arabella to do that worthy
 "fellow justice, or I shall disown her for
 "my sister."

The vivacity of lady Monteith had
 received so severe a check that she
 could not recover her spirits during
 her ride to lady Fillagree's. Fitzosborne
 discovered her dejection. "I know,"
 said he, "such solicitude is often very

“troublesome ; yet the fervency of my
 “friendship will not permit me to see
 “you dispirited without inquiring into
 “the cause of your depression.”

“It is so wholly feminine,” returned
 she, “that it is absolutely undefinable,
 “and must be set down in the catalogue
 “of my unaccountables, unless I should
 “give as a reason, what I am very un-
 “willing to admit ; I mean, an idea of
 “my lord’s, that some time or another
 “I did not treat your good advice with
 “sufficient deference. Pray, Fitzosborne,
 “when did you play the moralist ; and
 “when was I such a refractory pupil ?”

“Ah Monteith ! this is one of thy
 “misconceptions. I will explain the
 “whole affair, madam, though it is too
 “ridiculous to merit repetition. You
 “recollect the night we were together
 “at the opera.”

“Perfectly.”

“And

“ And that in return to some observa-
 “ tions which I made on the behaviour
 “ of lady Arabella, you said, disappoint-
 “ ment had made me splenetic ?”

“ I do.”

“ Lord Monteith heard your answer
 “ as he entered the box ; and he will
 “ persist in his opinion, that my ex-
 “ pressions were pointed at you, as a
 “ reproof for something in your manner
 “ to Vernon. I must excuse him by
 “ saying, that he was a little flustered.
 “ I followed him to Brookes’s, where
 “ we soon adjusted ——”

“ To Brookes’s ! Does my lord fre-
 “ quent Brookes’s ?”

“ O you tempter ! No ; I have too
 “ much honour to reveal secrets. The
 “ affair was soon explained, I was going
 “ to say ;—for Monteith really has a very
 “ good heart, which excuses a little
 “ accidental puzzle-patedness.”

Geraldine coloured; but her Proteus companion gave her no time to resent. Looking out of the chariot window, he relapsed into sentiment. "See, dear lady Monteith," said he, "how the giddy throng hasten to this festival of ostentatious vanity. A reflecting mind, on contemplating this crowd of carriages, must feel other sensations than those of pleasure. Not to mention the sufferings of those noble animals who draw the vehicles of tyrant man, the situation of master and servant, as exhibited upon the present occasion, is enough to cure the most obdurate heart of its partiality for those distinctions of rank which corrupt society now exhibits. How repugnant to the feelings of universal love is that pale emaciated footman, who, exposed to the inclemency of the seasons, suspends the flambeau

"over the carriage of his voluptuous
 "master! How remote must that man
 "still be from the ultimate perfection of
 "his nature, who can enjoy the pleasures
 "of a crowded assembly, while his
 "coachman quakes in the warping
 "wind, or shrinks beneath the pelting
 "storm! It is the cruelty of a Mezen-
 "tius: The living body is united to
 "putridity."

"There is some justice in your ob-
 servations," said the countess: "and
 "it behoves us as *individuals* to lessen
 "the evils of that inequality which
 "public good requires." The carriages
 now stopped; and as Fitzosborne led
 her to the gay assemblage of beauty,
 fancy, and elegance, her reflections on
 his character concluded with an observ-
 ation, that "his very failings leaned to
 the side of virtue."

The

The ball went on very much like other balls. Sir Richard Vernon and several gentlemen of his cast of character were present, and Geraldine complied punctually with her lord's injunction, either to sit down, or to dance with Fitzosborne. She had forgot to account for his appearing in a dress so correspondent to her own; and when some ladies, by pointing it out, alarmed her sense of propriety, her explanation was embarrassed, and consequently suspicious. As at the opera, Fitzosborne's attentions were confined to her; and his elegant address and polite vivacity added the sneer of envy to the whisper of detraction. Lady Arabella had indeed the honour to move down one dance with the duke; but his grace was so fatigued by the exertion, that he was obliged to renounce dancing, and to have

have recourse to Cassino for the rest of the evening. Her succeeding partners ranked no higher than commoners, without possessing any of the innate distinctions which gave celebrity to the partner of Fitzosborne. He had only bowed to her in the most distant manner possible. Her smile of invitation was unanswered; and she began to think a fainting fit was the only chance of rousing the monster's attention. She performed it in the greatest perfection; but on opening her eyes she felt a little mortified to find, that neither he nor the countess appeared in the circle which had gathered round her. Another glance convinced her, that they were not in the room.

"The heat of this apartment," said the lovely sufferer, "is insupportable. Do, my dearest Harriet, lend me your arm, and let me breathe a little
"pure

"pure air in the vestibule." The viscountess complied, and the mistress of the ceremony with several other ladies accompanied the fair invalid.

Lady Arabella cast a scrutinizing glance upon the suite of chambers through which she was led; but she descended into the vestibule without making any discovery. It had been converted into an orangery for the occasion, and decorated with a variety of lamps tastefully suspended. The many-coloured light trembling on the fragrant exotics, the freshness of the air, the stillness of the scene, and the extensive view which it admitted of the "stars in all their splendor" and "the moon walking in brightness," afforded a striking contrast to the glittering but artificial scene which they had just left. Lady Arabella and her friends were not the only admirers of its enchanting effect,
for

for at the upper end stood the countess and Fitzosborne.

"Pray let us go back," shrieked lady Arabella, who however did not much doubt their identity. "I am quite frightened. Somebody is here." The lady of the house declared, that it could be nobody whom she could object to, while the charitable viscountess whispered, "that it would be rude to interrupt a private party."

"Oh! not for the universe," exclaimed Arabella. "I would die a thousand deaths rather than be rude."

The countess advanced with an air of easy dignity, which the inquisitive looks of the other ladies soon discomposed. "Bless me, sister," said the candid Arabella, "I really did not think it was you."—"And Edward too," continued the significant lady Fitzosborne; "how do you do? There is no such thing
" as

“as catching your attention for one
 “moment this evening. How came
 “your austerity to condescend to visit
 “these tinsel amusements?”

“Pardon me, madam,” said Edward,
 bowing respectfully to lady Arabella,
 “those amusements cannot be tinsel
 “which have the power of attracting
 “sterling merit.” Her ladyship did
 not deign to take the least notice of
 his submission, but continued whispering
 the countess: “So you have one con-
 “stant *cecisbeo* I see, and Monteith stays
 “at home. Very singular, I vow. But
 “was you not afraid of taking cold
 “during this long conversation?”

“No,” replied Geraldine with re-
 covered composure; “our conversa-
 “tion was too interesting for me to
 “think of cold. What if I should tell
 “you, Arabella, that some part of it
 “related to yourself. But you really
 “treat

“treat your faithful swain’s advances in
 “too contemptuous a style for me to
 “begin my requested intercession, or
 “even to deliver to you a message
 “from your brother on the same sub-
 “ject.”

The party had now re-entered the house, when the countess, turning, said to Fitzosborne, “You forget Miss Parker.”—“Where is Miss Parker?” was the general inquiry. “In the orangery,” said lady Monteith. “No, madam, I am here,” echoed a shrill voice, which issued from one of the ladies who accompanied lady Arabella.

“Miss Parker could not have been left in the orangery,” observed the viscountess. “Your ladyship was certainly mistaken. She came down stairs with us.”

“And

“ And she was the first who supported me when I fainted,” said lady Arabella, who, in her eagerness to detect a supposed criminal, forgot, that fainting people do not always know what passes.

“ She certainly accompanied me into “ the orangery,” repeated lady Monteith.

Miss Parker, who was no other than the “ antiquated belle” at the opera, now came forward, and with a respectful courtesy, begged leave to explain: “ I certainly accompanied your ladyship and Mr. Fitzosborne down stairs, “ when you did me the honour to ask “ me ; but while your ladyship was engaged with him in looking at the “ stars, I found it was very cold, and I “ was afraid of my old attack in my “ shoulder ; so I thought I would step “ and fetch my pellice ; and I believe “ your

“ your ladyship and the gentleman were
“ too much occupied to perceive that I
“ was gone.”

A sarcastic smile, which lady Fillagee's politeness could scarcely restrain her from joining, followed this narrative, when Edward, like Joseph Surface, promised to give a full and satisfactory account of the matter. He said, that on his mentioning that he had observed a beautiful *Jacoba lily* in full blow as they entered, lady Monteith and Miss Parker had expressed a wish to pay it more attention; that he had the honour to escort them; and that, after admiring the flower, her ladyship was suddenly struck by the splendor of some particular constellations, when lady Arabella entered.

Another general smile ensued, and Geraldine, no longer able to rally her
spirits,

spirits, ordered her chariot; and, telling Miss Parker she would set her down at her own door, she relieved the ladies from the pain of suppressed merriment, by taking leave.

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CHAP. XXX.

Conscience, what art thou? Thou tremendous power!
 Who dost inhabit us without our leave;—
 How dost thou light a torch to distant deeds!
 Make the past, present, and the future, frown!
 How, ever and anon, awake the soul,
 As with a peal of thunder!

YOUNG.

THE supposed secret, mentioned in my last Chapter, was of too much importance to be confined to the discoverers. By means of the happy art of inuendoes, the initiated soon disseminated it through the whole circle, in the politest manner imaginable. One lady observed, that the adventures of the third Eloisa would soon be published: another affirmed, that it would be called Werter the Second, with a different catastrophe: a third wished to read the Chapter on Botany: a fourth

a fourth thought that that on astronomy would contain the most astonishing discovery : a fifth allowed, that astronomy and botany were both very suitable studies for shepherds and shepherdesses ; and every body hoped that the adventures of the poor little lady, who had lost her pellice, and got the rheumatism, would be inserted. The sarcasms of the viscountess were peculiarly piquant : for hers was the most suspected character in company ; and it is an invariable rule with ladies of her cast, that the odium with which you bespatter a neighbour's reputation has the effect, by retroaction, of furbishing your own. Her indignation was chiefly pointed at lord Monteith, who, she said, was certainly anxious to obtain the honour of being a cornuto ; and her idea was thought to be the more judicious, as it was known to correspond with the sentiments of the noble

noble viscount her husband. Envy, idleness, the love of saying good things, and a dearth of conversation, assisted her to propagate the story. For two days the town talked of nothing else, and every relater could add circumstances of fresh atrocity. In two days more, the truth of these adventitious circumstances became doubtful, and, being proved unfounded, the whole fabric fell with them to the ground. At the end of the week every body was heartily sorry for the dear misrepresented countess; and every body, forgetting the part they had themselves taken, heartily wished that some law might be invented to prevent defamation.—But to return to the object of these inquisitorial proceedings.

The lovely Geraldine plainly perceived the malicious explanation that had been given to an incident which

Fitzosborne had faithfully explained. The love of distinction was, as I have before observed, one of her ruling foibles; but she sought to gratify it by the noblest means. Her spotless fame added lustre to the splendor of her talents and the attractions of her beauty. She had ever been named as one of those few, who, in a degenerate age, afforded a happy instance of the possible union of propriety and fashion. To have the goodly edifice which she had reared with such assiduous care at once destroyed; to have her unsullied name become the jest of witlings and the associate of wilful depravity, was insupportable. Even supposing that the candid hearer would reject the calumnious assertion, she could not endure the very idea of having her character exposed to suspicious discussion. She sat silent in the chariot, the tear of anguish stealing down her cheek, incapable

incapable of attending to Miss Parker's narrative, whose regret about the pellice furnished her with a subject of lamentation till they arrived in town.

Fitzosborne read lady Monteith's sentiments. He rightly judged that this keen sensibility would prove injurious to his audacious designs; and he determined to exert his insidious arts to subdue it. The earl was not returned from the House. The countess wished him good night, and passed on to her dressing-room. Fitzosborne followed her to the door. "Excuse my anxiety," said he; "your look does not indicate a wish for repose. Will you allow me to sit with you till Monteith returns?" She replied, that she was not in spirits for company; and after a pause, "It is in vain," said she, "to disguise my feelings, Fitz-

“ osborne ; and you know the cause of
 “ my distress.”

“ I know nothing that can justify, or
 “ at least deserve, those tears. Dearest
 “ lady Monteith, for Heaven’s sake,
 “ conquer that emotion, which increases
 “ the misanthropy I long have felt at
 “ the narrow prejudice and illiberality
 “ of the world.”

“ You are always tilting against those
 “ windmill giants,” returned Geraldine
 with a languid smile. “ It is of the
 “ spirit of detraction and inconsiderate-
 “ ness that I complain ; of that cruel
 “ levity, which sports with what is
 “ dearer than life.”

“ Nay, now you urge your sensibility
 “ too far. It is weakness, not delicacy,
 “ to put our happiness so much in the
 “ power of others. Have you forgot-
 “ ten that beautiful sentiment, ‘ The
 “ con-

“conscious mind is its own awful
“world?”

“I grant its propriety only with re-
“spect to the tortures of guilt; for can
“innocence be insensible of the value
“of reputation?”

“It may disprove slander by despis-
“ing it, and by acting with marked
“contempt of its petty machinations.
“The tale you seem to apprehend is
“too poor, too contemptible for be-
“lief. I have but one fear respecting
“its public exposure.”

“What fear?”

“If lord Monteith should hear it.”

“If he should, what have I to
“dread?”

“The warmth of his character;
“his irritable impetuosity; his sus-
“picious ——”

“Suspicious, did you say? How
“must I be degraded, Mr. Fitzosborne,

“in his opinion! To suspect me after
 “four years experienced confidence!
 “And what must the world think of
 “me, if even my first, my dearest
 “friend doubts my rectitude?”

“I know that angels are not purer;
 “and when Monteith recollects himself,
 “his judgment will tell him the same.
 “He is now a little warped; an un-
 “happy ill-grounded apprehension—a
 “smothered spark nearly extinguished
 “by reason, which this ridiculous story
 “may revive;—and suspicion in a cha-
 “racter like his must be terrible.”

Geraldine leaned almost fainting
 against the wainscot. A deadly pale-
 ness was diffused over her intelligent
 face, and her heart panted with appre-
 hensive terror. None, except a Domi-
 tian or a Fitzosborne, who delight
 in torture, but must have pitied her
 agonies.

The

The traitor did indeed affect to pity. He dropped upon his knee, and uttered every rhapsodical expression which the most guileful art could dictate. "Dearest lady Monteith, for Heaven's sake be composed—my tortured heart bleeds to see your anguish—most injured—most lovely sufferer—Oh richly worthy of a better fate—Impart your anguish to the faithful friend who would die to relieve it."

The last words recalled her recollection. "Rise, sir," said she with becoming dignity. "My situation does not call for the active offices of friendship. You say I am injured. In what? From what motive do you torture me with suspense? You seem to possess some fatal secret respecting me. If I ought to know the evil you allude to, tell me at once, that I may arm my soul with fortitude to sustain my trials,

“or detect the calumny which sports
“with my peace.”

Edward was disconcerted. He had hoped that so much friendship might have surprized her into a little acknowledgment. And he perceived with regret that many a summer’s sun must still rise to mature his villany. He had never yet encountered the resistance of a firm superior mind, or so strongly seen the “loveliness of virtue in her own form,” or “felt how awful goodness is.” Yet, more remorseless than the Prince of Darkness, “he pined not at his own loss.”

The sophists, who in these evil days are falsely called enlightened, affect not to palliate their own vices by pleas of necessity and frailty, whatever disguise they may assume to expedite their success with others. Aspiring to a pre-eminence in impiety, which former
times

times feared to arrogate, they sin upon principle, promulgate systems to justify iniquity, and proscribe repentance by a morality which overturns every restraint, and a religion that prohibits nothing but devotion. Combining Pagan superstitions with the exploded reveries of irrational theorists, they place at the head of their world of chance a supine material God, whom they recognize by the name of Nature, and pretend that its worship supercedes all other laws human and divine. By the side of this circumscribed Deity they erect the idol shrine of its vicegerent, Interest; by the monstrous doctrines, that "whatever is profitable is right," that "the end sanctifies the means," and that "human actions ought to be free," they dissolve the bonds of society; and, after conducting their bewildered followers through the mazes of folly and

N 5

"guilt,

guilt, in search of an unattainable perfection, their views terminate at last in that fallacious opiate which infidelity presents, "the eternal sleep of death."

When posterity shall know that these principles characterize the close of the eighteenth century, it will cease to wonder at the calamities which history will then have recorded. Such engines are sufficiently powerful to overturn governments, and to shake the deep-founded base of the firmest empires. Should it therefore be told to future ages, that the capricious dissolubility (if not the absolute nullity) of the nuptial tie and the annihilation of parental authority are among the blasphemies uttered by the *moral* instructors of these times: should they hear, that law was branded as a vain and even unjust attempt to bring individual actions under the restrictions of general rule; that chastity was de-
fined

finer to mean only individuality of affection; that religion was degraded into a sentimental effusion; and that these doctrines do not proceed from the pen of *avowed* profligates, but from persons *apparently* actuated by the desire of improving the happiness of the world: should, I say, generations yet unborn hear this, they will not ascribe the annihilation of thrones and altars to the successful arms of France, but to those principles which, by dissolving domestic confidence and undermining private worth, paved the way for universal confusion.

Stimulated by that zeal for making proselytes which marks the missionaries of these doctrines, Fitzosborne had hoped to goad his victim into the snares of infidelity by the corroding pangs of previous guilt. Her unaffected agony at the idea of her husband's doubting the propriety of her conduct

and the rectitude of her heart, could only be inspired by connubial tenderness and real delicacy. The blush of generous indignation which kindled upon her cheek at the supposition that Edward's insinuations might proceed from sinister views, and the calm contempt with which she treated the little arts of seduction to which female vanity has sometimes yielded, convinced him that all his attempts to overturn her high-seated honour would be ineffectual, unless he could weaken the bonds of conjugal attachment, or remove the strong bulwark of conscious immortality, which gave energy to her principles and stability to her virtue. Her native sagacity assured him, that all these attempts must be made with caution; but his poisonous nostrums, once introduced, would work with silent vigour. If the conflict of the passions should not be sufficiently stormy in her tem-

temperate mind to erase the belief of future retribution, her thirst after knowledge might entangle her in metaphysical subtilties. The love of distinction and the allurements of example might induce her to add one more to those courageous females who conceive that the character of a woman is not entirely divested of weakness till she defies Omnipotence; while unrequited tenderness and unrewarded desert must estrange an exquisitely susceptible heart from its unworthy master, and direct its affections to the specious blandishments of an unprincipled imposture.

Fitzosborne's answer to Géraldine's spirited appeal was dictated by the most consummate art. He protested that he had no secret to divulge but what she already knew; namely, that lord Monteith had unwarily imbibed some suspicious apprehensions from the marked
admi-

admiration which sir Richard Vernon had paid to her at the opera, and to which the incidental circumstance of her being in remarkably good spirits that evening might contribute. He scarcely wondered at his friend's alarm, when he considered the free notions of the age, the baronet's libertine principles, the impetuosity of lord Monteith's temper, and his extreme susceptibility in a point of honour, which in his opinion probably proceeded from the warmth of his conjugal attachment. He begged pardon for too deeply sympathizing in her uneasiness, but owned that his feelings were never proof against the magic influence of female tears. The term "injured," which he perceived had alarmed her, was heedlessly uttered, without any reference, at least any designed one, unless it alluded to those illiberal slanderers who attempted to asperse

asperse a character which he verily believed was the only exception to that general carelessness of reputation too strongly characteristic of the manners of the present race of married ladies.

“Calumny, my dear lady Monteith,” continued he, “is now considered as
 “the test of fashion; and, instead of
 “shrinking from its pestilential attack,
 “even women of virtue conceive a slanderous paragraph in a morning paper
 “to be a kind of passport to celebrity;
 “and, pleased with becoming an object
 “of general attention, they wait very
 “patiently for time to confute what was
 “untrue in the report. Your extreme
 “delicacy (for now that you are a little
 “recovered I cannot help remarking
 “that it is too exquisitely susceptible)
 “and the peculiarity of your lord’s disposition make me see the consequences
 “of this affair in a more serious light
 “than

"than I should otherwise do: but as I
 "am afraid that neither of you will ever
 "practise the philosophy which I should
 "assume on this ridiculous occasion,
 "I can only say, that I shall be ready to
 "pursue any plan you shall suggest for
 "my conduct. Come, clear that pen-
 "sive brow; and be convinced, that
 "Monteith may see other men admire
 "you without supposing that you en-
 "courage their addressers."

This speech had the desired effect.
 It convinced the countess that she
 ought to conceal from her lord every
 circumstance in her own behaviour
 which excited the animadversions of
 others; and while her agitated spirits
 were somewhat consoled by the hope
 that his displeasure was now wholly con-
 fined to Vernon, she saw the necessity
 of extreme caution, lest it should ulti-
 mately point at her. Her apprehen-
 sions

sions of some criminal intention in Fitzosborne's passionate address were transient. The extreme audacity and guilt annexed to the bare idea of his having formed an illicit attachment, and the absolute impossibility of his even *hoping* for success, persuaded her, that his passionate language was only, as he affirmed it to be, the unpremeditated sympathy of sincere friendship; and she now blushed at her own indelicacy in doubting, though but for a moment, the rectitude of his heart.

Esteem and confidence are never so powerful as at the moment of removed suspicion. She wanted an adviser and confidant. Who could seem so proper to perform that office as the sagacious sentimental Edward? The first scheme which lady Monteith proposed to stop the circulation of the slanderous tale was, that Fitzosborne should immediately

ately leave the family. The arch-tempter signified his perfect acquiescence ; but with deference stated, that in his opinion such an apparent coincidence with the prejudice of malevolence would tend to confirm its censure ; and to his repeated advice to treat the whole story with indifference and bravado, lady Monteith opposed her own poignant feelings, which would never permit her to go into company while conscious that a whisper was circulated to her disadvantage. At length a compromise was agreed to between the opposite opinions, and Geraldine determined to take leave of the gay world with more than philosophic distaste of its levity and uncharitable asperity. Forgetting that retirement had sometimes suggested the wish of introducing her brilliant talents to the notice of more accurate observers, the envy, hatred, and detraction which impeded

impeded her career, made her again wish to take shelter in the quiet undisputed superiority which Powerscourt or Monteith presented. The presence of caprice and affectation renewed her Lucy's remembrance, rendered the recollected sweetness and ingenuousness of her character still more pleasing, and stimulated her impatience to pour her sorrows into the bosom of soothing friendship; or to heal her corroded heart by the gentle balm of parental tenderness. The proposed alliance which had occasioned her journey to London being to all appearance entirely frustrated, she wished to return to the pleasing occupations of domestic life; and the claims of filial duty determined her to take Powerscourt in her way to Scotland. To prevent any suspicion, that her retreat was in consequence of a breach between the earl and Fitzosborne, it was

was proposed, that the latter should continue at Portland-place till lord Monteith's parliamentary engagements terminated: and Geraldine entertained a private hope, that her lord's interest with ministry might procure some post which would tend to reconcile Edward to the severe blow which his fortunes had received by the rejection of lady Arabella, and at the same time convince the world, that caprice was not the distinguishing characteristic of all the Macdonald family.

Fitzosborne now recurred to the conversation which had really been begun in lady Fillagree's orangery; and he debated the probable event of his renewing his addresses with so much seeming anxiety, and acted the part of the mortified swain with so much adroitness, as entirely removed every shadow of suspicion from lady Monteith's mind, engaged her

her anew in the office of a consoler, and even roused a degree of self-accusation at her having dared to suspect that the morals of the virtuous Edward fell short of the perfection to which they pretended. She lamented with pathetic sweetness the depraved state of female taste, which gave a coxcomb infinite advantage over a man of sense with the dissipated belles of the day; and Fitzosborne, resigning all his hopes of conjugal felicity, with a profound sigh declared, that in future he must tranquillize his troubled soul with the endearing sympathy of female friendship. He proceeded with platonic delicacy to draw the mental portrait of such a friend as he wished to find: carefully including in the enchanting composition every grace which Geraldine seemed conscious of possessing. Superior refinement, and an apprehensiveness of even just praise,

praise, was mentioned with emphasis; and while the orator stated the peculiar difficulty in which this elevated fastidiousness would place a susceptible mind, impelled by warm esteem to express its admiration, yet restrained from speaking by the certainty of offending, the countess listened with unsuspecting delight: so true is the maxim,

And while he tells her he hates flattery,
She says she does so, being then most flatter'd.

Lord Monteith interrupted the conversation at a late hour. He returned in very high spirits, not only elated by the triumph of his party, but with his own particular success; having made a neat and appropriate speech, consisting of three or four well-turned periods, which was honoured with profound attention. His lordship was less quick in discovering improprieties than in re-

senting them when pointed out by others. Fitzosborne's sitting alone with his lady at five o'clock in the morning, alarmed him no more than Fitzosborne's escorting her in a correspondent dress to lady Fillagree's fancy-ball. He recounted the events which had taken place in the debate with too much eagerness to listen to the narrative of her adventures. He only heard with pleasure that Vernon paid no attention to her, and that she was perfectly in charity with her *cecisbeo*. So many agreeable occurrences made him readily consent to her proposal of paying her annual visit to Caernarvonshire immediately; and he was too sincere a friend not to enter with eagerness into her plan of rendering Edward some pecuniary services. His late display of oratorical ability seemed to ensure success; "for," said he, "though I want nothing
" from

"from Government, why should not
 "my friends reap some advantage from
 "the fatigue which I endure in the ser-
 "vice of my country? Do you think
 "that they dare refuse me, Geraldine,
 "when they know how much I am
 "courted by Opposition?" He conclud-
 ed by observing, that Edward's talents
 would do honour to any administration.
 His appearing in a conspicuous line
 would also mortify Arabella, and con-
 vince her that she ought to have respect-
 ed her brother's *deeper* knowledge of
 manners and characters, and not have
 dismissed a lover who was infinitely too
 good for her.

CHAP. XXXI.

Meanwhile, by Pleasure's sophistry allur'd,
 From the bright sun and living breeze ye stray:
 And, far in London's gloomy haunts immur'd,
 Brood o'er your fortune's, freedom's, health's decay;
 O blind of choice, and to yourselves untrue!
 The young grove shoots, their bloom the fields
 renew,
 The mansion asks its lord, the swains their friend;
 While he does riot's orgies haply share,
 Or tempt the gamester's dark destroying snare,
 Or to some courtly shrine with lavish incense bend.

AKENSIDE.

WHILE the earl of Monteith, with all
 the blunt sincerity of his ardent cha-
 racter, pursued his friendly but unfuc-
 cessful design of serving Fitzosborne,
 the polite circles were very merry at his
 lordship's expence, every one wonder-
 ing that he could not see what was so
 extremely visible to every body else:

As lady Monteith had by retirement subdued the acrimony of competition, even the candour of her rivals returned, and the tide of popular opinion grew still stronger in her favour. Large allowances were made for a little vanity and a little indiscretion. Most people sincerely believed that, after all, her marked predilection for Fitzosborne was nothing more than a harmless flirtation, perhaps entered into out of frolic, or with a view to mortify Arabella. These delicate extenuations were generally concluded by a laugh at his lordship's staying in town to vindicate her character, and a fear, that such uncommon good-humour on his part might encourage her to go greater lengths in her *mirth* than she at first intended.

The annihilation of domestic happiness opening the fairest views for Fitzosborne's success, he determined to employ every engine

engine for its destruction. The guarded honour of Geraldine had hitherto rejected his insinuations to the disadvantage of her lord with the warmth of confirmed affection, and the indignation which a consciousness of the inseparable union between his reputation and her own must inspire. But various instances had convinced him, that this "God of her Idolatry" was vulnerable in a thousand points; easily deceived, easily seduced, soon irritated, and as quickly pacified. The presence of the countess, her superior judgment, and the respect for the decencies of life, which his strong attachment to her had inspired, had hitherto preserved him from any gross acts of immorality, and given a decorum to his conduct which justified the confidence she always placed in his behaviour. Fitzosborne too plainly saw

preserve Monteith in the hour of temptation, when his guardian angel was absent from her charge. Those temptations he resolved to supply ; he doubted not his own ability to environ him with snares, from which even a firmer virtue would find it difficult to escape ; and yet at the same time to conceal his insidious interference, and to cover his machinations with the prostituted names of friendship, sentiment, and morality. Though lady Monteith's enlarged understanding had sufficient discernment to discover calumny, and to treat unfounded suspicions with contempt, could she resist the evidence of truth ? or could her feeling heart support that cruel indifference which a dissipated husband always affects to show to the amiable wife whom he injures by his vices ? Her strong susceptibility at every circumstance which threatened the diminution

nution of their mutual regard convinced him that she could not. And surely the resentment which a young and beautiful woman must feel at such injurious negligence would render her an easy prey to the wiles of a seducer. To suppose the contrary, was a paradox which his knowledge of the human character would not admit.

It is not my intention to pollute my page by a description of those successful plans of iniquity by which Fitzosborne subverted the principles of the man who really loved him, and felt anxious to render him essential services. Unhappily, the world presents too often the spectacle of one immortal being alluring another to inebriety, or plunging it in depravity, for me to excite surprize by adding, that such actions are not deemed incompatible with the sacred title of a friend. These seducers

have not indeed always the deeper motives which I ascribe to Fitzosborne; but let it be remembered, that the principles he professed gave a sanction to his more monstrous atrocity. Private vices are public benefits. Is it not a general advantage, that property should be transferred from an indolent sensualist to an active intelligent enterprising citizen, who would turn it to beneficial purposes? Monteith would be just as happy with his dogs and horses, the only sphere of enjoyment which his limited understanding seemed capable of relishing, though his beautiful wife, and the fair possessions with which she was endowed, were resigned to some clever fellow who had wit enough to acquire them. Supposing the restraint of conscience conveniently silenced by that scepticism which is now esteemed so liberal, what other principle will you substitute to prevent such practices?

practices? Success soon reconciles the world to the prosperous villain. A little declamation will satisfy sentiment, and even the watchful dragon of honour may be charmed to sleep by honied words. Gratitude, which used to rank next to integrity in the scale of virtues, is now, like its immediate predecessor, degraded from its proud pre-eminence. Refinement has discovered, that the giver bestows not from benevolent motives, nor from affection to the receiver, but merely to relieve himself from the pain of an uneasy emotion; and it has taught us to infer from these premises, that it would be weakness to feel obligation for benefits which wholly proceed from the all-invigorating principle of self-love.

Entangled in the mazes of an illicit amour, begun in a moment of inebriety, and pursued from want of cou-

rage to be singular, and want of energy to be firm, the unhappy Monteith beheld his present situation with horror, and contemplated his past happiness with vain regret. His little daughters, his Geraldine, his domestic tranquillity, his rural amusements,—how forcible was the contrast between those guiltless pleasures, and the clamour of a Bacchanalian revel, the corroding inquietude of a gaming-table, and the venal allurements of a courtesan.

Thousand after thousand vanished at these midnight orgies. The image of his injured wife and supplicating infants constantly rose to his view ; but they only came to increase his desperation, not to restrain his madness. The words, “ One more bottle, and another song ! What Monteith a flincher ? Come, my lord ; luck must change ; make one more spirited effort : ” and, “ Can the dear-
 “ est

“est of men, for whom I have refused
 “such liberal offers, desert me?” Such
 expressions formed the magic spells whose
 powerful incantations enthralled a mind,
 reduced to the deplorable state of act-
 ing the part it abhorred, and adopting
 the vices it despised, lest the votaries of
 dissipation should suspect that he wanted
 courage to be wicked.

Firzofborne did not expose his un-
 tainted reputation by *appearing* in these
 scenes of depravity. He contented
 himself with pointing out parties which
 he entreated his lordship to avoid, or
 with mentioning instances of surprising
 turns of luck at the gaming-table which
 it would be folly in any one to expect.
 He exclaimed against Mrs. Harley’s in-
 famy, but acknowledged that she was
 in the highest fashion; that she had re-
 jected a much larger settlement than
 what she now solicited from Monteith,

which he hoped his lordship would have resolution to refuse ; and yet, after all, as the strong bias of the passions seemed to point out that such temporary engagements were congenial to our natures, their criminality must wholly depend upon the circumscribed, and perhaps erroneous, systems of political jurisprudence. He always concluded these powerful dissuasions by urging the peculiar severity of lady Monteith's principles, and the consequent necessity of concealing his misconduct from her. He conjured him to hasten to Powercourt ; and then added, what he knew would negative the proposal, " How
 " will you support the tears and the re-
 " proofs of that injured woman ? For I
 " fear, my friend, that in spite of every
 " prudent precaution, your pale de-
 " jected looks, embarrassed manner, and
 " constrained vivacity, cannot fail of
 " attract-

“attracting her apprehensive observation.”

While the cruel machinations of Fitz-osborne thus assailed the honour of Geraldine by vitiating the mind of her husband, the destined victim of his worse than murderous designs enjoyed the soothing consolation of pouring her sorrow into the attentive ear of friendship. Ignorant of the severer trials which immediately awaited her, the tranquillity of rural scenes, the benevolent simplicity of her revered father, the dignified resignation of Mr. Evans, and the interesting sweetness of the amiable Lucy, conspired to calm that painful conflict which undeserved calumny and disappointed hope had excited in her soul. The early carol of the lark, the dying fall of the nightingale, the kindling glory of a summer's morning, the reviving freshness of the evening zephyr,

the various delights which the country affords, and the attractive simplicity of its uncontaminated inhabitants, inspired lady Monteith with strong indignation against that fastidious taste which, while it degrades the majestic operations of Nature with the epithets of ordinary and vulgar, or passes them with stupid insensibility, pursues the celebrity required by the construction of a carriage or the adjustment of a robe. Her censures against this petty ambition were, however, too warm to be the dictates of cool judgment, and evidently proved, that the fair declaimer had been once included in the frivolous groupe who pay a blind idolatry to popular esteem. Disappointment inspired other notions; and, guided by this new impulse, she appeared once in her conversations with Miss Evans to lean to the dangerous doctrines of Fitzosborne. "When I re-
flect,"

“flect,” said she, “on the evanescent
 “nature of reputation; that it is acquired
 “without solicitude, and lost without
 “guilt; that it is the sport of calumny, and
 “the battery from which envy mortally
 “wounds the peace of innocence, I feel
 “convinced that it is beneath the at-
 “tention of a well-governed mind.”

The conversation had been previously confined to the caprices of fashion, and Miss Evans was surprized that it should produce such a serious conclusion; for to this genuine child of Nature the eclat annexed to the invention of a becoming turban, or even the honour of an innumerable party, seemed unworthy of a moment's anxiety. She therefore fixed her intelligent eyes upon her friend, and asked her to what she alluded in this reflection?

“My own sad story,” said Geraldine,
 “is ever predominant in my mind.

“Even

"Even while I am enjoying the de-
 "lights of these beloved peaceful scenes,
 "I cannot for one moment forget that
 "I am now a mark for public ridicule;
 "and I am endeavouring to derive
 "some consolation from those senti-
 "ments which a gentleman, a very
 "sensible man, and a friend of Lord
 "Monteith's, has frequently suggested."
 "They can only apply," said Lucy,
 "to the case of those who place their
 "*ultimate* hopes in the applause of the
 "world. They have nothing to do
 "with the well-grounded mind, which,
 "while it pursues the steady path of
 "duty, is pleased with being encouraged
 "on its journey by the modest voice of
 "well-earned praise. Far be it from
 "me, my Geraldine, to seek to diminish
 "your consolations. Innocence allows
 "you to possess a very superior one;
 "and while your life disproves accusa-
 "tions,

“ tions, you have no cause to be de-
 “ pressed. Yet the watchful suscepti-
 “ bility of female honour cannot but
 “ feel every attack upon its character;
 “ and it most impatiently longs to refute
 “ the censures which its purity abhors.
 “ Lord Monteith’s friend, I suppose,
 “ only made general observations. He
 “ could not allude to your particular
 “ story.”

“ They were the observations of
 “ Fitzosborne,” said lady Monteith
 gravely.

“ Of Fitzosborne?” interrogated
 Lucy. “ I have heard you describe
 “ him as one of the most enlightened,
 “ uncorrupted, and amiable of men:
 “ the person too, respecting whom your
 “ conduct is censured.”

“ It is exactly as you describe. He
 “ is thus deserving, and I am so ac-
 “ cused.”

“ Does

“ Does a fixed contempt for the good-
 “ will of that mass of his fellow-crea-
 “ tures which is called the world, im-
 “ ply this superior merit? The world,
 “ I have heard my dear father often say,
 “ judges right, but from wrong pre-
 “ mises. It is hasty and rash, not dis-
 “ passionate and reflecting. It kindles
 “ into indignation at a specious tale: it
 “ loads a suspected character with op-
 “ probrium; but however false its in-
 “ ference, however mistaken its judg-
 “ ment, its errors always lean to the
 “ side of justice and virtue. And I am
 “ the more inclined to pay a deference
 “ to my father’s opinion, because I find
 “ his idea of that aggregate body of
 “ which I am an individual confirmed
 “ by my own feelings.”

“ I shall only join the general decision
 “ of the world, which you so reverence,”
 replied the countess, “ when I found the
 “ praises

“ praises of Mr. Fitzosborne. To the
“ manners and the exterior of the most
“ finished gentleman, he adds the in-
“ formation of the scholar, and the pro-
“ fundity of the philosopher. Perhaps
“ his ardent love of truth may urge him
“ to too great a contempt for established
“ rules ; and you know, Lucy, we must
“ not expect superior minds to pay a
“ scrupulous attention to the little
“ punctilios which custom exacts from
“ ordinary characters. He is actuated
“ by the most exalted views, and his
“ life is the noblest comment upon his
“ opinions.”

The limited observation of Miss Evans had never discovered such a being as lady Monteith described ; and she regarded the delineation of its distinguished properties with somewhat of the same kind of scrupulous curiosity with which we peruse the description of
the

the unicorn and the kraken; not absolutely denying that such things may exist, but wishing to have their reality more clearly identified. Her wish was soon gratified, and this human phoenix was introduced at Powerscourt by an event in which chance (the modern term for Providence) had a smaller share than *ostensibly* appeared.

The post always arrived at sir William's in the afternoon: and though the good baronet had nothing of the bashaw in his character, and was by no means an adept in the science of politics, he constantly exercised an unlimited authority over the newspaper, the contents of which he regularly recited, in an audible voice, to the party assembled round his hospitable board. The journal of passing occurrences which found admission at sir William's, was generally uncontaminated by private slander, party abuse,

abuse, or fulsome panegyric, and simply a plain narrative of the events of the day. It *happened*, however, that after lady Monteith had spent about four months at her father's, the following paragraph found admittance :

“ It is rumoured in the polite circles,
 “ that a certain ministerial nobleman in
 “ the vicinity of P*****d Place, finds
 “ sufficient attractions in the beautiful
 “ Mrs. Harley to console him for his
 “ recent disgrace; while a fair incon-
 “ stant is trying, whether the keen air
 “ of the C*****shire mountains
 “ may not be beneficial to a consump-
 “ tive reputation. It is said, that lord
 “ M*****'s settlements on his new
 “ estate are uncommonly liberal.”

Sir William was not versed in the language of initials and asterisks; and was not in possession of the decyphering glossary which a knowledge of polite scandal

scandal supplies. After two or three attempts to unravel the enigma, he delivered it to his daughter, with a request that she would tell him what it meant. A crimson blush and a dying paleness alternately took possession of her face while she perused the paragraph. After coolly observing, that it was some very ill-natured nonsense, she complained of faintness from the heat of the room, a circumstance which her situation, being near her fourth confinement, might render oppressive. Miss Evans's arm was ready to lead her to her own apartment, at the door of which she intreated her friend to leave her, and to superintend the backgammon party in her room, as she much feared she should not be able to rejoin them that evening.

No alarm was excited that night by this circumstance. Sir William's communications had been too confused to
con-

convey any explanation to his auditors. and any future appeal to the newspaper for information was impossible, for it had suddenly disappeared during the bustle occasioned by lady Monteith's faintness. But since the butler and the housekeeper were both very great politicians, and very anxious to inspect the conduct of administration, this circumstance too frequently happened to bear at this time any mysterious air.

Geraldine's indisposition wore next morning a more serious aspect. Her maid owned, that she had been extremely restless and agitated all night, and her pulse indicated considerable fever. Sir William's parental tenderness took alarm. The most eminent medical assistance which the country afforded was called in, and an express was dispatched to town to summon her husband.

The

The petrifying power of vice requires time before it can render the heart completely callous. Lord Monteith had not yet forgot his inimitable Geraldine, the mother of his pretty little girls, the founder of James-town, and the benign enchantress whose magic powers had converted the wild unfrequented shores of Loch Lomond into the residence of plenty, elegance, and happiness. His recollection of the guiltless pleasures once enjoyed in her society aggravated his fears for her safety; nor could a thousand Mrs. Harley's detain him from her bedside. Endeavouring by the speed of his return to atone for the criminality of his absence, relays of horses were ordered upon the road, and the exertions of the postboys were stimulated by additional douceurs. But Lord Monteith is not the only furious driver that has found it impossible to

travel from himself. New to the suggestions of remorse, yet unable to divert the pain of its scorpion-sting by the fallacious justification of comparing his own conduct with that of other men of fashion, his troubled imagination continually placed before his eyes the frightful image of an amiable wife murdered by his vicious indifference; and his thoughts were alternately occupied by cursing his own folly, and frantically addressing Heaven to spare a life which he now felt to be infinitely dearer than his own.

Such a situation called for the ameliorating offices of friendship, and the sentimental, dispassionate Fitzosborne had claimed that pious task. To abate the reader's indignation against that gentleman's conduct, I must affirm, that it was afterwards satisfactorily proved, that the fatal paragraph which I have quoted was not communicated

to the newspaper editor in a handwriting that bore the *least* resemblance to Edward's. I will also own, that his emotions during the journey to Powerscourt were almost as poignantly distressing as those of his fellow-traveller: Conscience, indeed, was less loud in her accusations, because her sensibility had by frequent repression been rendered more callous. But the probable disappointment of those plans of aggrandisement which he had pursued with such wicked diligence, harassed his apprehension; and he regretted, that human science had not yet reached its summit of perfection, by presenting to him the immortalizing elixir that would enable him to dispute with death for the possession of the victim whom he had marked for a more dreadful destination.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

